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Editorial

This summer, in the European Baptist Federation, we have celebrated *Amsterdam 400*. Also, at IBTS we concluded the celebrations of our Diamond Jubilee Year with a reunion, a garden party, a splendid graduation ceremony, public lectures and a service of thanksgiving on Pentecost Sunday. We have marked these two celebrations with special publications, details of which can be found elsewhere in this edition of the Journal.

This edition of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* takes us into our tenth year which is a milestone in itself. We have created a tradition of focusing on the work of our own academic community in the first edition of each volume and we do so in a splendid way this year. From my perspective there is a theme linking these three articles which address issues in the church in three widely separated eras. That theme centres around one of our common catch-phrases of ‘communities of conviction’.

Colin Symes takes us to the north west isles in his article and explores a moment of choice for the Kings of Northumbria in the sixth century. The choice taken was to look west to the Christian communities of Ireland and a way of being church at variance with the dominant life emerging from Rome. The choice had consequences which are important – the establishment of the mixed monastic communities at places such as Whitby, the work of the missionary bishops throughout Northumbria and beyond, and the flowering of poetry especially celebrating creation. Colin Symes helps us to see how the Northumbrian Kingdom was changed by aligning itself with the Columban communities of conviction with their profound vision.

Yevgeniya Kannunikova takes us forward one thousand years in the stories of the missionary church to the Anabaptist communities of conviction and their reflection on possessions during the 1500s; a pertinent topic for much of the world today as the demand to purchase, to consume, to possess has gripped so many through the current model of economic development. What happens if we seek to enact the vision, in this case if goods are shared? How are communities re-shaped if their convictions about discipleship involve another approach to living with the sharing of possessions and habitat? Well, Munster reminds us it can lead to excess, but before the final debacle what was really happening there? Then how were convictions played out in the south Moravian towns of Mikulov and Slavkov and the other towns where Anabaptists of variant convictions found their homes for several generations and developed communal villages such as Sobotište?

David McMillan draws us on to our own lifetime and the struggles which can emerge within the one true church if the sub-set communities have very different convictions about whose land it is and how the land is named, and if all is to be understood through the perspective of five hundred years of troublesome history. Ireland, Northern Ireland, Ulster, Britain – whatever we call the second largest of our European north west isles, be sure passions run deep within communities which have heartfelt, but variant convictions, memories and grievances. Is there a way forward for the disciples of Jesus to engage in the healing of memories, putting aside violence, engaging in reconciliation and searching for peace and justice together; in other words, revising the convictions. What sort of insights are needed and who might be able to help?

These three articles, though essentially dealing with historical moments at different points in the two thousand year history of the church, are all absolutely relevant to our present life as believers. They are thought-provoking and challenging to our own norms and standards and to our dominant model of the church in contemporary European society. We would do well to ponder these critical moments from our own continental story and ask what types of community of conviction are appropriate for the missional church in Europe today, how is the vision to be enacted and what happens when others have differing convictions and conflict develops?

Finally, may I remind you that our sister journal *Baptistic Theologies* is now available. The first edition was published in May on the theme of 'Baptists and Revival'. The second edition in Volume One will be published later in the autumn centering on the Psalms. A combined subscription for both *Baptistic Theologies* and this Journal is available at a special rate and I encourage you to take advantage of the offer.

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS

Early Northumbrian Spirituality: The Fruit of Straitened Circumstances

Colin Symes

Introduction

In the human-divine story we know as history, spiritual formation may be deeply influenced as a result of seemingly insignificant decisions. At the time of their making, it could not have been foreseen to what effect such choices would lead, and yet with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to retrace the steps of time to key moments which shaped later streams of Christian spirituality.

In this paper, I propose that one such event was the decision of the northern Anglian, Bernician royal family around 617AD to turn for aid to the west of Britain and to the Columban spiritual tradition,¹ rather than to the southern Roman church and its mission to the Angles at Canterbury. From this choice issued a chain of events which would lead to the eventual development of a hybrid, indigenous spirituality combining Ionan traditions with Anglo-Saxon culture, pioneered by the Northumbrian mission of Aidan in his monastery school on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, off the coast of north-east England.

I will also argue that there were distinctive developments in spirituality which trace their origins to the Bernicians' decision:

- the practice of relationship in community fostered through the central role of the monastery, later the minster, in the spread of Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.
- the deep devotion to Christ as warrior-redeemer through the high place given to the cult of the cross in Northumbrian spirituality, with its carved stone crosses, reminiscent of the Celtic traditions of Iona and Ireland.
- the practice of the vernacular in Christian worship in the British Isles, bringing a sense of immediacy and accessibility of God to common people, in turn contributing to the cohesion of the English-speaking kingdoms.

¹ The term 'Columban' is used to denote the spirituality of the Iona mission, begun by St Columba in 597AD. The term 'Celtic' has been avoided as being somewhat broad and insufficiently defined.

The Fortunes of War

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 617AD tells that ‘This year was Æthelfrith, king of the Northumbrians, slain by Rædwald, king of the East Angles; and Edwin, the son of Ella, having succeeded to the kingdom, subdued all Britain, except the men of Kent alone, and drove out the Ethelings, the sons of Æthelfrith, namely, Eanfrid, Oswald, Oswy, Oslac, Oswood, Oslaf and Offa’.²

At the beginning of the seventh century AD, the northernmost kingdom of the Anglian invaders of the British Isles was Bernicia, bordering on Deira to its south.³ Æthelfrith had succeeded to the crown of Bernicia in 593AD, but then subsequently ousted his brother-in-law, Æthelric, uniting the two kingdoms into one, called Northumbria, in 604AD. Æthelric’s brother Edwin fled south, finding shelter with the East Anglian King, Rædwald, with whom in 617AD he marched north, taking back the Kingdom from Æthelfrith and killing his rival in the attempt.

The Chronicle mentions the sons of Æthelfrith as being driven out by Edwin; it is this moment which is decisive. To whom would they flee? Although their natural path may have been assumed to lie south into Mercia and the Saxon lands, the Bernician heirs had fallen out of favour with their Anglo-Saxon kinsmen, of whom Rædwald of East Anglia was overlord, or *breatwalda*. This would have taken them into danger. Neither would they have been welcomed by the Britons, whom they had dispossessed to take their lands during the previous two hundred years.

Even going west could be leading them into danger, for it was a territory Æthelfrith had already bruised with battle in 604AD at Dægsestan.⁴ However, the Scotie kingdom had received the faith of Christ from Columba and his monks of Iona, who had arrived in 563AD. It was to this source that the widowed queen Aacha desperately looked for help with her children.

² ‘Her wærð Æðelfrið Norðhymbra cining ofslagen fram Reodwalde Eastengla cininge, Eadwine Ælling feng to rice geyde eall Brytene buton Cantware anre adrefde ut þa eðelingas, Æðelfriðes suna, þet wæs ærest Eanfrid, Oswald Oswiu, Oslac, Oswudu, Oslaf Offa.’ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Bodleian Manuscript Laud 636 E, accessed online at <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/e/e-L.html>, 16.03.2009.

³ See map at appendix 1.

⁴ ‘Her Ægðan Scotta cining feaht wið Deolreda wið Æðelferþe Norðhymbra kining æt Dægstanstane, man ofslah mæst ælne his here... Ne dorste siððan nan Scotta cininga lædan here on þas þeoda.’ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Bodleian Manuscript Laud 636 E, accessed online at <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/e/e-L.html>, 16.03.2009.

Iona of Columba

The churches of the far west of the British Isles had been somewhat cut off from the rest of Europe by the swathes of Germanic tribes invading during the previous centuries since the Romans had left around 400AD. Stephen Neill refers to the ancient Christianity of the Roman Empire in Britain having been 'overthrown two centuries later by the invasions of the Angles and Saxons; Christianity had withdrawn into the fastnesses of Wales, and there carried on a remote and precarious existence'.⁵ In Ireland, however, through the mission of Patrick and his descendants, strong Christian communities had emerged, different but not detached from the Roman rites.⁶ They were characterised by ascetic rigour and a boldly charismatic approach to mission. It was out of this heritage that Columba issued,⁷ establishing his monastic community on Iona, following the Irish dating of Easter, and tonsuring his monks across the forehead in an Eastern fashion, rather than following the Roman crown tonsure of the Benedictines.⁸

The Venerable Bede, writing a generation later, tells of the baptism of Æthelfrith's son, Oswald, and his thegns by the 'Irish elders...when he was in exile'.⁹ He does not reveal that this was on Iona, centre of the Columban mission to what is now known as Scotland. But Oswald would there have been formed in this spirituality of the Irish church, with its emphasis on community, ascetic devotion and adventure for Christ. Bede was later to refer to Oswald's own intense personal spirituality, evidenced in his frequent recourse to prayer.¹⁰ Rather than from the Benedictine rule, Columban monasticism drew its inspiration from the Eastern Mediterranean, modified by Martin of Tours in the fourth century.¹¹ It was a missionary monasticism, inspiring figures such as Columbanus to travel across Europe, founding new communities *en route*.¹² This missionary impetus was to be a key factor in the development of a distinctive Northumbrian spirituality in the wake of Aidan's mission.

⁵ S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Aylesbury: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 67.

⁶ Stephen Neill comments that 'it is important not to overestimate the independence of the Celtic churches. They never imagined that there could be more than one Church...they were standing simply for their right to be faithful to ancient traditions which had grown up in a remote and inaccessible part of the world.' *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷ St. Adomnán's *Life of St Columba*, for example, focuses on the saint's miracles, prophecies and angelic visions.

⁸ On forms of tonsure, see M. Deansley, *A History of the Mediaeval Church* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976), p. 31.

⁹ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), III, 3, p. 113.

¹⁰ Bede describes how, on being seated, Oswald's hands habitually fell open in his lap, in an attitude of prayer. *Ibid.*, III, 12, p. 116.

¹¹ On this, see Martin Robinson, *Rediscovering the Celts: The True Witness from Western Shores* (London: Fount Books, 2000), p. 32.

¹² St Columbanus or Columban founded Irish-tradition monasteries at Luxeuil, St Gall and Bobbio. See Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 72.

Christianity in Northumbria

Somewhat ironically, Oswald's uncle Edwin now received the new Christian faith himself, having married the Kentish princess Æthelburh on the condition that her chaplain, Paulinus be permitted to preach the gospel to the King and his thegns. After deliberation with his council, Edwin was baptised in St Peter's, York, on Easter Day, 12th April 627AD.¹³ Many of his subjects were also baptised, and the Roman mission seemed set fair for success. However, Edwin was killed in battle at Hatfield Heath with the pagan Cædwalla of the Britons and Penda of Mercia at Hatfield Chase in 633AD,¹⁴ and Paulinus and Princess Æthelburh returned to Kent for safety.

As a result of their victory, for a year, 'Cædwalla and Penda ravaged all the Northumbrian land'.¹⁵ For a time, Eanfrid, eldest son of Æthelfrith, who had taken refuge away from the rest of his family in Pictland, took back the throne of a revived Bernicia, while Osric, cousin of Edwin ruled in Deira. Reverting to paganism, both kings were dead within a year, victims of the predations of the British kings. It was at this point that circumstances brought Oswald back onto the stage, as a contender for the throne and, with him, the emergence of a new, Columban light in the north.

A Return to Faith

At the battle of Denisesburn, also known as Heavenfield, near Hexham, in 634AD, Oswald, supported by a Scottish army, defeated the pagan British forces, killing Cædwalla. The night before the battle, in response to a dream of St Columba appearing to him, Oswald had raised a cross and prayed before it.¹⁶ As a result of this triumph, Oswald, son of the Bernician Æthelfrith and Deiran Aacha, was able to unite the land once again into one Northumbria, with his capital at Bebbanburgh¹⁷ on the coast.

He now wasted no time in calling for Iona's help in re-establishing the Christian faith in his realm; after an abortive attempt by the missionary monk, Corman, who had been too harsh in his presentation of Christ,¹⁸ Aidan was sent in 635AD, and finding the mirror image of his beloved Iona on the eastern coast, in the tidal island of Lindisfarne, he established a

¹³ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, II, 14, p. 97.

¹⁴ 'Her wearð Eadwine cining ofslagan fram Cadwallan Pandan on Heðfelda on .ii. idus Octobris, he rixade .vii. gear' *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Bodleian Manuscript Laud 636 E, accessed online at <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/e/e-L.html>, 16.03.2009.

¹⁵ Ibid., accessed 16.03.2009.

¹⁶ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 2, p. 111.

¹⁷ Modern Bamburgh, named after Bebbha, a Bernician queen.

¹⁸ Referred to in Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 5, p. 117.

Columban missionary monastery which was to become what is today called by some ‘the cradle of English Christianity’.

On this island was born a hybrid spirituality, bringing together the genius of Irish and Columban tradition with the warrior spirit and creativity of the Anglo-Saxons, resulting not only in the rapid spread of Christian faith through the whole of England, as far as the Thames and South Coast, but also producing works of art, such as the Lindisfarne Gospels, gems of Northumbrian insular culture.¹⁹

Monastery and Mission

From the outset, it was the monastery on Aidan’s Lindisfarne which was the base for the evangelisation of the Northumbrians. Aidan was an avid evangelist, and Bede records that even before he could speak English, the Bishop preached the Word in his native Gaelic, being translated by Oswald himself to his ealdormen and thegns, ‘for the bishop was not completely at home in the English tongue, while the King had gained a perfect knowledge of Irish during the long period of his exile’.²⁰

Martin Robinson has observed how well the Irish monastic tradition, tribal in its origins, fitted within its new milieu among the Anglo-Saxons, in that, while their kings were more powerful generally than the high kings of Ireland, ‘the basic structure of Celtic and Saxon societies were more akin to one another than either was to the urban structures of the earlier Romano-British culture’.²¹ This is perhaps an important factor also in understanding why such a community-based Celtic mission as that of Aidan was relatively more successful and enduring than the previous mission of Paulinus.

Aidan gathered a school of young men to train as missionary monks, among them the brothers Cedd (Cedda) and Chad (Ceadda), Cynibil and Cælin, as well as Wilfrid, giving a strong relational base to his new work. He also encouraged young noblewomen, such as Oswald’s sister Ebba and Edwin’s niece Hild to form communities of women and men at double monasteries at Coldingham and Whitby.

Aidan trained his charges by example. Bede tells of his preference for travelling on foot, so that when he came across people on the road, ‘he might at once approach them and, if they were unbelievers, invite them to

¹⁹ The Lindisfarne Gospels may be viewed online in facsimile version at the British Library website at <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/ttpbooks.html>, accessed 22.04.2009.

²⁰ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 3, p. 114.

²¹ Robinson, *Rediscovering the Celts*, p. 59.

accept the mystery of faith; or, if they were believers, that he might strengthen them in the faith'.²²

The structure of the Lindisfarne monastery, also, was not that of the mainland Roman rite. The European monasteries were overseen by Bishops, territorial in their jurisdiction.²³ In the Irish and Columban pattern, the monastery was overseen by the abbot, in a closely-related community treated as his family. Bishops were active, and travelled to minister, but in the monastery, even the bishop was subject to the rule of the abbot.²⁴

Aidan planted out several mission monasteries under the aegis of Lindisfarne. Melrose, Hexham and Abercorn on the shores of the Forth were outposts of the Northumbrian mother-church, and sees in their own right. These may in fact have been earlier monasteries in the British era, as suggested by John Blair, and certainly, in the case of Abercorn, there is a tradition reflecting this understanding.²⁵ Certainly, the mission-monastery, or *minster*, was key for centuries to come in the British Isles, as well as in the mission to northern Europe of the next generations. Blair seeks to define such an establishment in his work thus:

A complex ecclesiastical settlement which is headed by an abbess, abbot or man in priest's orders; which contains nuns, monks, priests or laity in a variety of possible combinations, and is united to a greater or lesser extent by their liturgy and devotions; which may perform or supervise pastoral care to the laity, perhaps receiving dues and exerting parochial authority; and which may sometimes act as a bishop's seat, while not depending for its existence or importance on that function.²⁶

This emphasis on relationship and vulnerability in community contributed a deep vein of spirituality in the Columban church of the Angles, and led to a growth of the minster as a key spiritual focus in the land. Indeed, so vital did the minster become, that in the early eighth century almost every chief nobleman had obtained a royal charter to found one in Northumbria, although they were falling into disrepute as being 'aristocratised' by the ruling class endowing them.²⁷ So ubiquitous were they, also, that it was not until the tenth century that local parish churches with their own priest and landholdings became widespread in England.²⁸ A major effect of the minster tradition, according to Blair, is 'seen in its

²² Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 5, p. 117.

²³ Deansley, *A History of the Mediaeval Church*, p. 31.

²⁴ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 4, p. 115.

²⁵ J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 368 and 505.

capacity to absorb changing social and religious needs', because of its team ethos and its group dynamics.²⁹

Had the Roman mission with its episcopal hierarchy been more enduring under Paulinus, it is unlikely that the minster tradition with its strong emphasis on community would have become so vital to the ongoing development of Christian faith in the British Isles, an outcome of the Columban formation of Anglo-Saxon society.

Northumbrian Crosses

It is significant that there are few remains of Columban-Northumbrian mission buildings surviving. They were presumably considered at best functional and at worst mediocre, for the most part built in wood and seen as worthy of replacement with the more enduring Norman stone buildings left to us today.³⁰ Perhaps the only extant church building in England surviving from the seventh century is the small chapel of St. Peter's-on-the-Wall at Bradwell in Essex, St. Cedd's base of operations, from where he reached out to the East Saxons to whom he was sent from Lindisfarne.³¹

However, what is left to us in comparative abundance are the remains of Northumbrian stone preaching crosses, akin to the great crosses of the Scots found on Iona and in many places in Ireland. They bear testimony to a surge in devotion to the cross among the Anglo-Saxon churches, and particularly to the redemptive work of Christ. Of these, perhaps the best preserved are those at Ruthwell, on the Solway Firth, Bewcastle in Northumberland and at Sandbach in Cheshire. These are carved with great artistry and beauty, and seem to have been the Northumbrians' lasting legacy in architectural terms, learned, it is asserted, from the Scotie and Pictish craftsmen of the north and west.³²

Rosemary Cramp refers to Bede's assertion that Oswald's cross at Heavenfield in 634 AD was the first erected in Bernicia, and followed Ionan tradition.³³ While it is difficult to accept Bede's statement, given the earlier Christian mission to Edwin's court, and the attested baptism of many as far north as Yeavering (and Bede himself says, 'as far as we

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 505-6.

³⁰ Rosemary Cramp suggests that hewn oak thatched with reeds was used in the church of St Peter at Lindisfarne, following Irish tradition, but later protected by lead sheeting in an Anglian style. See R. Cramp, 'The Artistic Influence of Lindisfarne in Northumbria' in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD1200*, eds. Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), p. 218.

³¹ Referred to by Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 22, p. 146.

³² See G.F. Browne, *The Ancient Cross Shafts at Bewcastle and Ruthwell* (Cambridge: CUP, 1916), p. 41.

³³ Cramp, 'The Artistic Influence of Lindisfarne in Northumbria', p. 223.

know', allowing for some uncertainty³⁴), yet there appears to be a clear connection between the Columban practice of raising crosses and Oswald's action before the battle. A later bishop of Lindisfarne, St Cuthbert, asks to be buried near to the 'holy cross' he has himself erected near the church, indicating in what veneration Aidan's community held such monumental signs.³⁵

In then going out to carry the gospel to the people, it appears that crosses were also set up at which to gather for worship. In many cases, it seems, a permanent building followed, in some cases, years later if at all.³⁶

The Northumbrian crosses are redolent of Celtic art, with their knotwork, fruits and animals. The cross at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire is arguably the most impressive, standing today in the church there, in the middle of the building. It is some 5.28m high, in New Red sandstone,³⁷ and carries depictions of stories from Scripture, including the crucifixion, the annunciation and the flight into Egypt.³⁸ Unusually, there is also a depiction of the desert fathers, St Paul and St Antony, breaking bread together. Browne points out that these two are also carved on crosses found in Ireland at Monasterboice and Kells, and in Scotland at Nigg, Kirriemuir and St Vigean.³⁹ These references point to the importance of the spirituality of the desert in the development of the Irish and later Columban tradition, with its asceticism and emphasis on miraculous encounter with God. But the monument is undoubtedly Northumbrian in its origin, emphasising also the important role of the Celts in the spiritual formation of the Anglians and their descendants.

The Ruthwell Cross and the *Dream of the Rood*

These monuments also witness to a strong devotion to the cross in seventh and eighth century Northumbrian spirituality. Incised in Anglo-Saxon runes into the shaft around the sculpted panels of the Ruthwell monument are lines taken from the Northumbrian epic poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, an account of Christ's passion and triumph over death told by the cross itself. Margaret Deansley suggests that the poem 'curiously combines Byzantine

³⁴ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 3, p. 112.

³⁵ Bede, *The Life and Miracles of St Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne*, ch XXXVII accessed online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/bede-cuthbert.html>, on 29.04.2009.

³⁶ In the case of Great Burstead, Essex, the author's childhood home parish, St Cedd set up a station cross by the village well in 653AD, but by 669AD, no church building was in evidence, despite the urging of Earconwald, Bishop of London. It was not until 680AD that a building was erected, probably in wood. (Source, *A History and Guide to the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Great Burstead*, R. Worcester and B. Rodwell).

³⁷ Ed. M. Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), p. 11.

³⁸ Browne, *The Ancient Cross Shafts at Bewcastle and Ruthwell*, p. 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and the old Saxon elements'.⁴⁰ She in fact asserts that to the 'great school of Byzantine art belonged [also] ...the Northumbrian art of the eighth century, though in this case it was fused with a strong Celtic tradition'.⁴¹

With the discovery of supposed relics of the true cross, one of which was claimed by Pope Sergius I himself in 701AD,⁴² the symbol of Christ's suffering had taken on renewed significance in popular worship. 'The setting up of the Ruthwell Cross' suggests Deansley, 'can be ascribed with great probability to this period.'⁴³ She then goes on to refer to the sixteen lines of the poem carved in the stone of the cross:

I lifted up the bless'd realm's King,
High Lord of heaven, I durst not fail Him...

They mocked us both together; I was all steeped in blood,
Poured from that human side.⁴⁴

While the adoration is Byzantine in style, and Celtic in influence 'the admonition to every Christian to be a fearless warrior under the gentle Leader of the Host' and 'the death-wail raised by his friends for the "young hero" are purely Germanic'.⁴⁵ Swanton asserts of the Ruthwell Cross that 'it is clearly a preaching cross. Its message is evangelical, stating the role of Christ in the world of men both historically and eternally.'⁴⁶ In terms of the spiritual formation of England, this example draws strongly on the theme of *Christus Victor* which would have appealed so much to warrior Northumbrians.

Here then is a tangible sign of the emergence of a distinctively Northumbrian spirituality, the Anglo-Saxon warrior epic, carved into the Celtic cross at Ruthwell, flowing out of the circumstance of the Anglo-Saxon decision to take refuge in a Columban missionary monastery on the western fringe of Europe.

Vernacular Worship

The Ruthwell Cross runes represent a further important aspect of this spirituality born out of straitened circumstances. Although there are Latin inscriptions around the borders of the artwork, the runes are in *Eanglisc*,

⁴⁰ Deansley, *A History of the Mediaeval Church*, p. 70.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴² Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, p. 48.

⁴³ Deansley, *A History of the Mediaeval Church*, p. 70.

⁴⁴ These are some of the runic words carved on the Ruthwell Cross. From *The Dream of Rood*, in my own unpublished translation from the original Old English, 2003, online at www.colinsymes.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/Rooddream.htm, accessed 29.04.09.

⁴⁵ Deansley, *A History of the Mediaeval Church*, p. 71.

⁴⁶ Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, p. 13.

the Anglo-Saxon ancestor of modern English. This reflects the understanding of the importance of the vernacular in the worship of Christ which the Northumbrians received from Iona.

In their collection of eight Insular poems taken from Iona, including an acrostic Latin hymn of praise, *Adiutor Laborantium*, ascribed to St Columba himself, Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Markus include several invocations in old Gaelic, prayers used in the Columban monastery, in a flowing and rhythmical metre.⁴⁷ It is clear from this that languages other than Latin were useful for devotion, and accepted in the church. This is in sharp contrast to the Roman usage of the Latin races, who, Stephen Neil points out, saw the tongues of the barbarians as ‘so uncouth that nothing could be done with them’. He suggests that for this reason, the old Celtic language of Gaul died out, other than in Brittany. In the north, on the other hand, the monks believed that, while Latin was the language of the liturgy, local languages could be written down and ‘used for literary purposes’.⁴⁸ We have already noted that Aidan is known to have preached in his native Gaelic, translated into English by Oswald, giving weight to this use of the vernacular in the Northumbrian mission.⁴⁹

Perhaps the epitome of vernacular usage comes with the story of Cædmon the cowherd, related by Bede in his history.⁵⁰ Cædmon, unable to sing, flees from the feast when the harp comes his way. In the night, asleep in the byre, he hears a voice calling him by name to sing. He replies that he cannot sing, but the voice tells him ‘Nevertheless, you must sing’. He is given a song, in his own tongue, of the Creation of the world (this is the first recorded poem in English, with a date of around 680AD).⁵¹

Now let us praise the Heavenly Kingdom's Lord
 For His great wisdom and creating Word.
 The Wonder-Father's wondrous works abound,
 Eternal Lord, when He began,
 He first created for earth's children
 Heaven a roof, this Holy Maker,
 Then middle-earth to guard mankind,
 Eternal Lord, He then adorned
 The earth with men, this Lord Almighty.⁵²

⁴⁷ T.O. Clancy and G. Markus, *Iona: The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p. 78.

⁴⁹ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 3, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Ibid., IV, 24, p. 215.

⁵¹ Attested to by Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed online at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/88036/Caedmon>, 22.04.2009.

⁵² A setting of the author's own translation of Cædmon's song from the Old English.

When, the next morning, Cædmon is able not only to remember the song, but can sing it beautifully, he is presented to the Abbess Hild of Whitby, who calls on him to devote his life to writing the Scriptures in song. Bede records that he went on to sing ‘about the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole history of Genesis, of the departure of Israel from Egypt... of the incarnation, passion and resurrection of the Lord ...and the teachings of the apostles’.⁵³

The *Dream of the Rood* has been ascribed by some to Cædmon or another later writer, Cynewulf.⁵⁴ It is certainly probable that it represents the flowering of English vernacular Christian verse of the Northumbrian age. Other settings of poetry from the Northumbrian era, notably Cynewulf’s, are extant, particularly *Elene*, on the theme of the finding of the true cross by Queen Helena in 335AD, a recurring motif.⁵⁵

It may also be noted here that even above the Latin text of the wonderful Lindisfarne Gospels, an English gloss is used by Bishop Eadfrith, its scribe, to aid the reader’s comprehension, clearly visible today on close examination.⁵⁶ The vernacular was therefore not shunned by the Anglo-Saxons as it had been in the Latin provinces of Europe.

In terms of the spiritual formation of Northumbria, and its later fruit in the wider culture of England, the use of the vernacular in worship has an important contribution to bring to the sense of personal connection with a God who is relevant to the everyday. Just as in the blessings of the Gaels, where ordinary events as common as milling bread or milking had been hallowed with prayer in the native tongue,⁵⁷ so the worship of God, the setting of Scripture into poetry and the expression of human interaction with the divine in *Eanglisc* were perhaps the early signs of a later flowering of vernacular spirituality which eschewed the institutional Latin of the continent.

Therefore, as Old English grew in usage, across the lands of the Angles and Saxons, it became a unifying force, even incorporating the tongue of the later-settling Vikings. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the fact that by the time of King Alfred the Great, first King of All England in the ninth century, books were being translated into English from Latin, such as Pope Gregory I’s *Pastoral Care*, because of the scarcity of Latin

⁵³ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, IV, 24, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, p. 58.

⁵⁵ Cynewulf, *Elene*, trans. C.W. Kennedy (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses, 2000), accessed online at http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/Elene_Kennedy.pdf, 22.04.2009.

⁵⁶ An excellent facsimile version online of the Lindisfarne gospels can be examined and closely scrutinised at <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/ttpbooks.html>, accessed 16.03.2009.

⁵⁷ A relatively modern collection of such Gaelic prayers and blessings can be found in *Carmina Gadelica*, *Ortha nan Gaidheal/The Song of the Gael*, anthologised by Alexander Carmichael in 1899.

speakers in his realms. King Alfred himself indicates his intentions when he writes, ‘I think it better that we too should translate some books which are the most necessary for all men to understand – that we should turn these into that tongue which we all can know’.⁵⁸ His laws, the *Deemings*, were also published in English, and Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* was rendered into the vernacular in his reign. There is even a legend of Alfred having been given a book of English poetry by his mother as a prize after he had committed it all to memory. Here, perhaps, we can discern the heritage of Oswald, the English-translator King, who gave the words of life to his people in their language, called by Bede ‘a beautiful sight’.⁵⁹

It may be suggested that the survival and growth of the English language into modern times owes something to its role in the transmission of Christian faith in those early centuries; one may also wonder whether English, like the ancient Gallic language, might have disappeared under the linguistic empire of Roman church Latin, had Aacha and her children gone south.

Conclusion

I have sought to show that the circumstance of Queen Aacha’s choice, to send Prince Oswald and her family, in their time of danger and misfortune, to exile in the islands of the west, yielded a rich seam of spirituality in the Northumbrian age, characterised by relational, strongly missional communities, deep devotion to the Christ of the cross and a relevance of God to the everyday, through the use of English as a vehicle of spiritual expression. This has shaped and enriched Anglo-Saxon and subsequent British culture down to the present era. Much of its longevity and vitality must be put down to its ability to adapt as circumstances change, and to the harmonising and absorbing of different voices, adding to the overall rather than imposing one monolithic idea.

There is a tendency in some streams of Christian spirituality to resist change and to allow no circumstance to shape us. Yet through the adversity of coming to terms with an unwelcome reality, Oswald is himself spiritually formed and, as a result, is able to be instrumental in the development of a strand in the cord of British spiritual life, which is still drawn on in the spiritual formation of many modern Christian believers.

Moreover, the spirituality of Northumbria, after the Synod of Whitby in 664AD, gave impetus to the missions of Willibrord and Wynfrith of

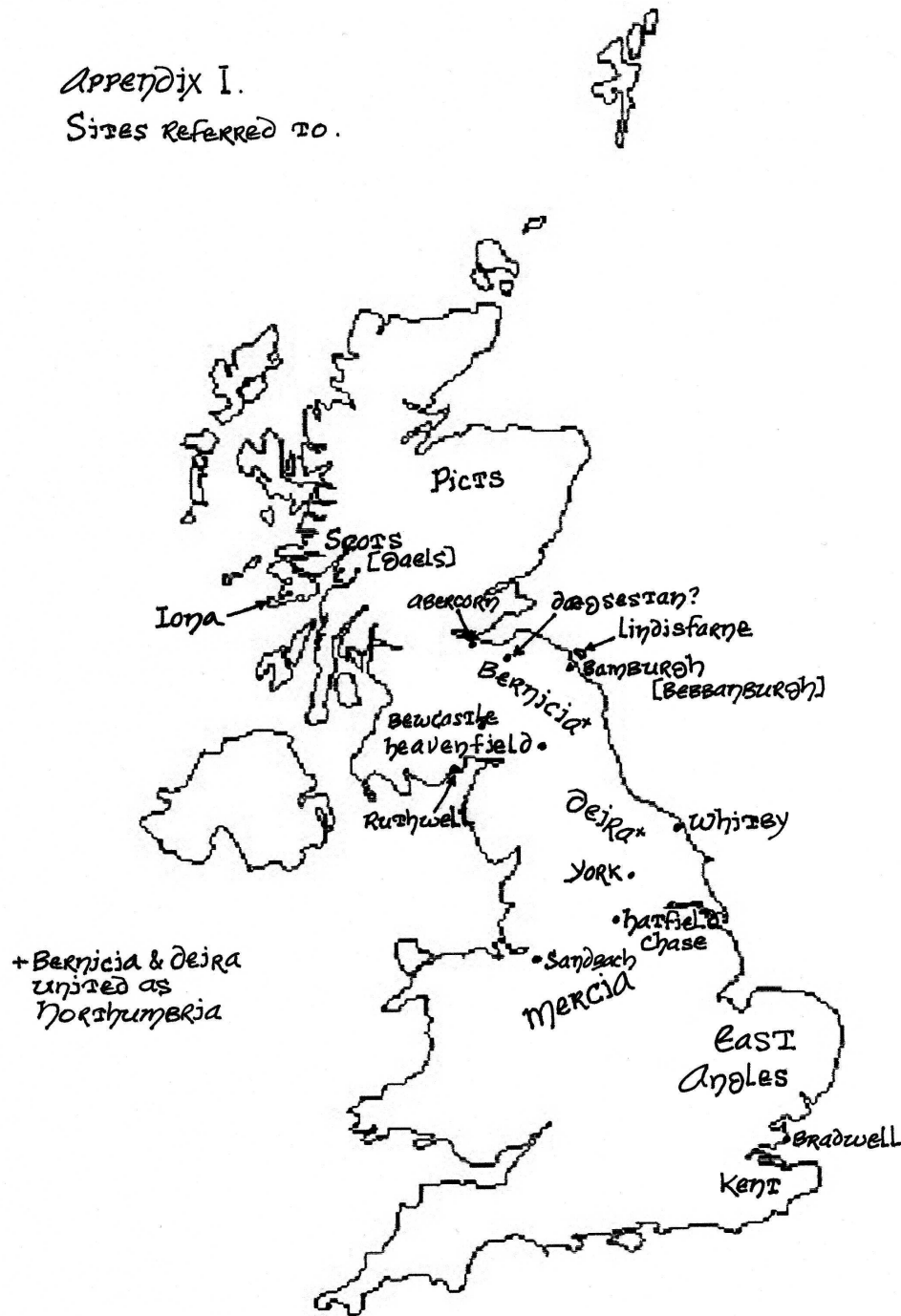
⁵⁸ Alfred the Great, *The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great* (Oxford: J P Smith, 1852), p. 66, accessed online at <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SfC1AAAAIAAJ&printsec=toc#PPA7,M1>, on 22.04.2009.

⁵⁹ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III, 3, p. 113.

Crediton as they encountered new mission-fields in the lands whence their Germanic ancestors had come. And even today, through their witness of faith and sacrifice, the early Christians of Northumbria are an inspiration to those who invest time to consider them.

Appendix I.

Sites Referred To.



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The specific significance of 'community of goods' among Anabaptist movements in the sixteenth century

Yevgeniya Kanunnikova

Introduction

Living a life of discipleship in community was very important for Anabaptists. They believed that the Holy Spirit worked in every person and that Scripture was a guide for a true Christian life. If the life of discipleship and the nature of the church as set out in the Scriptures was an important spiritual focus for Anabaptists this also meant that the economic activity of believers needed to be compared with the norms of the Kingdom of Heaven. Arnold Snyder provides a helpful insight, arguing that for many of the Anabaptists, 'Kingdom norms were economic sufficiency (not surplus) and the sharing of any surplus with those in need. Anabaptists were convinced, as had been the ascetic tradition before them, that ample justification for this view could be found in the Bible.'¹

Such views on economic relationships led Anabaptists to a particular communitarian way of life – the so called 'community of goods', although the practice of this varied across the Anabaptist groups. The New Testament passages that speak most explicitly about community of goods are Acts chapters 2 and 4. These chapters contain an account of the economic practices of the early church – that they had everything (economic possessions) in common. 'All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had' (Acts 4:32). This was not, however, the only passage used. Balthasar Hubmaier, writing in 1526, referred, as did many Anabaptists, to the Sermon on the Mount: 'I have ever and always spoken thus of the community of goods: that one person should always look out for the other, so that the hungry are fed, the thirsty given drink, the naked clothed, etc. For we are not lords of our goods, but stewards and distributors. There are certainly none who say that one should take what belongs to the other and make it in common. Rather, much more that one should give the coat besides the mantle, Matt. 5:40.'²

¹ C.A. Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: Revised student edition* (Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997), p. 312.

² B. Hubmaier, *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book* (1526), in W.H. Pipkin and J.H. Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1989), p. 183.

Since love, expressed through economic sharing, was important in the teaching of Jesus and was vital for the early church, the Anabaptists, in their desire to turn back to the roots of the church, also practised economic sharing or ‘community of goods’. There were various approaches to practising the ‘community of goods’ in the sixteenth century. For consideration of the ‘community of goods’ in Anabaptism I have decided to choose three particular expressions of the practice. Two of these, found among the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites, are obvious. For the third (which I deal with first) I have chosen a strand represented by Thomas Müntzer, in which there was a commitment to changing economic relationships through violence if necessary. I will then look at the Swiss Brethren, showing that the main focus of their lives was based on the Gospel’s teaching, which needed to permeate all spheres of human being. ‘Community of goods’ – of a particular kind – was a part of such permeation. This meant that they did not force anyone to have everything in common or to share their own property but care of those who were in need was very important for the Swiss Brethren. In my final third part I will turn to the Hutterian Brethren, who divided from the Swiss Brethren over this issue. I will show that, on the one hand, taking care of people who were in need and having everything in common was necessary and important for the members of the Hutterian congregations but, on the other hand, joining Hutterian communities was a voluntarily act. I hope in all three cases to show the significance of community of goods within Anabaptism.

1. Thomas Müntzer and the needs of the poor

Thomas Müntzer was known as a leading religious – indeed mystical – revolutionary in the early years of the German Reformation, particularly during the Peasants’ War of 1525. There is no evidence that Müntzer was ever baptised as a believer, and in this sense there is debate about including him as an Anabaptist, but he was part of the Radical Reformation and certainly opposed infant baptism: ‘If it were necessary for our salvation, we would much rather embrace a honey-sweet Christ and have good Greek or German wine poured over us than submit in such ignorance to this sprinkling with water.’³ Stayer traces the relationship between the Peasants’ War and Anabaptist communitarian thinking, arguing that Anabaptist community of goods ‘...owes a crucial, if indirect, debt to the Peasants’ War.’⁴ In the 1520s many peasants were stirred to rebellion against their

³ T. Müntzer, *Protestation or Proposition* (1524) in P. Matheson, ed., *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 191.

⁴ J.M. Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), p. 3.

poverty, desiring equal rights, and Müntzer, in his statements, argued that not only did people need to be equal, but they should have everything in common, which included buying and selling property together.⁵

However, Müntzer did not confine himself to the idea – later to be typical of some Anabaptist thinking – that this kind of community could be brought about voluntarily. Instead he suggested, in apocalyptic terms, the driving out or even killing of princes and lords who did not want to support the Gospel. If some princes or lords did not want to share, they came under divine judgment – the sword of execution.⁶ But Müntzer, with his army, suffered defeat at Frankenhausen, after which he found the sword turned against him.⁷ The question of community of goods was raised during his interrogation. He spoke of how one of his beliefs had been *omnia sunt communia* – that property was to be distributed to all in need. Stayer, in his discussion of this, argues that what Müntzer was drawn to as he thought about communitarianism could be equated with a quality that is often associated with Anabaptist spirituality – ‘yieldedness’, as *Gelassenheit* is often translated. It can certainly be argued that there was in Anabaptist thinking a desire to be freed from worldly desires for material goods.⁸ But it seems as if Müntzer was pursuing a different way of thinking in that he did not stress the personal decision to yield; rather there was a political pronouncement that yielding must take place.

It would be wrong to think that Müntzer’s approach was political rather than theological. For Müntzer, property ownership was an outcome of the Fall. In *The Letter to the Princes* he wrote: ‘The people will be free and God alone will be their lord’, and also explained what this meant: ‘The stinking puddle from which usury, thievery and robbery arises is our lords and princes. They make all creatures their property – the fish in the water, the bird in the air, the plant in the earth must all be theirs. Then they proclaim God’s commandments among the poor and say “You shall not steal”. They oppress everyone, the poor peasant, the craftsman are skinned and scraped.’⁹ One of the notable features of the Peasants’ demands was, as Stott puts it, ‘the stark opposition of selfishness and the common good’,¹⁰ and Stayer refers to economic ideas which had, as an integral element

⁵ T. Scott, *Thomas Muntzer: Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), p. 87.

⁶ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 107.

⁷ H.J. Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer: Apocalyptic Mystic and Revolutionary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 187.

⁸ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 122.

⁹ Müntzer, *The Letter to the Princes*, in Matheson, *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, p. 329.

¹⁰ Scott, *Thomas Muntzer: Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation*, p. 184.

within them, a considered anti-materialistic piety.¹¹ Yet Pearse suggests that Müntzer viewed the poverty of the common people as a barrier to their spiritual enlightenment.¹² Stayer accepts that Müntzer ‘did not expound a philosophical anti-materialism that made of matter an evil principle... but he did denounce social materialism. His society’s preoccupation with material things was, for Müntzer, the most prominent symptom of a disturbed relationship between God, man and creatures in a corrupt, fallen world.’¹³ He used the example of the rich man in Luke 10, told by Jesus, that he could not come into the Kingdom of Heaven with all his property.¹⁴ The coming Kingdom was not for the rich.

Although Müntzer is the best-known spiritual leader of the Peasants, there were other important leaders in this period. Sebastian Lotzer from Memmingen was probably the primary author of a crucial document, the *Twelve Articles*. He wrote pamphlets in 1523 and 1524 which highlighted Christ’s social commandments and encouraged a spirituality marked by holy works of mercy to replace the ceremonial holiness of the Catholic Church. The *Twelve Articles* denounced the enemies of the Reformation, who claimed that the new gospel was a cause of rebellion, and stated that there could be a Christian justification of revolt. The Articles presented a rejection of serfdom, an affirmation of the traditional common property of villagers and a criticism of paying tithes and rents. What is significant is that the articles insisted that the peasants’ grievances should be tested against biblical norms alone.¹⁵ This was not primarily a matter of communalism being advocated as against feudalism, but of the teaching of the Bible being applied in new and radical ways.

It is sometimes thought that with the defeat of the peasants this strand of Anabaptism died out. But this is not the case. Research has shown that Hans Hut, one of the most remarkable missionaries of the Anabaptist movement, continued some of the apocalyptic thinking of Müntzer. They had been together in the battle of Frankenhausen and after Hut escaped he ‘maintained his engagement on behalf of the “poor” and.... perpetuated Müntzer’s ambition to give people a mystical faith and teach them to oppose all ecclesiastical authorities and instances of social oppression’.¹⁶ Another Upper-German Anabaptist figure was Hans Denck, and he, like

¹¹ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 108.

¹² M. Pearse, *The Great Restoration* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), p. 42.

¹³ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁵ T. Scott, and B. Scribner, eds., *The German Peasants’ War: A History in Documents* (London: Humanities Press International, 1991), p. 252.

¹⁶ H.J. Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 17; cf. W.O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525-1531* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1977).

Hut, was an heir to the thinking of Müntzer. One person who came into contact with Denck, in Strasbourg, was Melchior Hoffman, and in 1530 he founded a community, mainly drawn from the poor, in East Friesland. In 1533 Hoffman was arrested and imprisoned, but his movement continued to grow and in 1534 and 1535 found expression in the Anabaptist communitarianism and the apocalyptic regime that was established in the city of Münster.¹⁷

While this community in Münster – which came to be seen as a New Jerusalem – had links back to the Peasants' movement, other influences were present. As Sayer notes: '...a body of civic-minded notables of high social standing reluctantly sided with the Anabaptists as the only means to preserve the endangered religious and political freedoms in the town'.¹⁸ Among the powerful influences in the city was Bernard Rothmann, who was to produce his own body of followers. The Anabaptist leader Pilgram Marpeck, although he did not emphasise community of goods, drew on Rothmann's writings in his *Admonition of 1542*.¹⁹ What Marpeck wrote shows that the communitarianism of this period was attractive, at least as an ideal. Marpeck said about community life as expounded by Rothmann: 'But even though they control their possessions, such true believers do not say in their hearts that these are theirs; rather, their possessions belong to God and the needy. For this reason, among true Christians who display the freedom of love, all things are communal and are as if they had been offered, since they have been offered by the heart.'²⁰ In reality the situation was much more complex. Williams suggests that the motivation for what happened in Münster was partly biblical and partly military.²¹

In February and March 1534 about 2,000 non-Anabaptists were forcibly expelled from Münster and about 2,500 Anabaptists took their place. In terms of community of goods, there was an appeal for new Anabaptist immigrants to bring money, food and clothes with them. The saints, says Sayer, 'encouraged' people to bring money, gold and silver.²² It seems that it was particularly women and the poor who responded positively and were enthusiastic about this 'community of goods'. One woman, for example, wrote to her sister outside the town, asking her daughter to come and join her. This is a small part of her letter, 'I am not

¹⁷ Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Sayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 123.

¹⁹ See P. Marpeck, *The Admonition of 1542* in W. Klassen and W. Klaassen, eds., *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Scottsdale Pa: Herald Press, 1978), pp. 159-60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²¹ G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2000), p. 565.

²² Sayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 133.

concerned whether she has clothes or not. Send her to me; she will have enough here. For you should know that the Almighty has bestowed such grace upon us that I am able to go about in gold, velvet and silk clothes... And the poorest have become as rich through God's grace as the burgomasters or magistrates of the town.'²³ The developments in the town led to tragedy, as is well known, but this should not obscure the fact that for a time there was a genuine vision for economic sharing, which derived at least in part from the vision that motivated Thomas Müntzer and was carried on through Hut and Hoffman.

The significance of the communitarianism I have examined here is that there was a concern to apply the teaching of the New Testament to economic relationships, especially for the good of the poor. As one typical statement put it, 'people will eat from one pot, drink from one vessel and obey one man insofar as it is necessary for the honor of God and the common good... the people will all work in common, each according to his talents and his capacities. And all things will be used in common, so that no one is better off than another.'²⁴ Equality was a key word among people in this stream of the radical Reformation, which meant that everything needed to be in common, and God's judgment was pronounced on those who refused to share their property with others. The kingdom that was coming was to be marked by the rich and powerful being deposed and the poor being honoured.

2. Swiss Brethren and Christian mutual aid

In the second part of my paper I will write about the Swiss Brethren, who began with baptisms of believers that took place in Zürich in 1525, and their specific understanding of the 'community of goods', and I will argue that a major feature of this practice among Swiss Brethren was the support of the poor. No one was forced to take care of brothers and sisters but everyone had a desire to help those who were in need. In Stayer's opinion the Swiss Anabaptists did not see Acts chapters 2 and 4 as being an example that the church should always follow. Although they considered the possibility of communitarian practice, and they knew about what was being suggested among the Peasant leaders, they adopted what Stayer terms the idea of 'Christian mutual aid', where sharing was expected to come about as the result of a voluntary decision of those who owned any

²³ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁴ M.G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 211-212.

property.²⁵ Felix Mantz, in whose house the first baptisms took place, expressed this, saying that 'whoever is a good Christian should share with his neighbour when he is in need'.²⁶

There was a link – indeed several links – between the events in Zürich and the Peasants' revolt. In their attempt to make wider connections and receive guidance, the radical Reformers in Zürich wrote to Thomas Müntzer, as well as to Luther and Carlstadt. In his letter to Müntzer, Conrad Grebel, who conducted the first baptism in the house of Mantz in 1525, spoke of how Müntzer's writing on baptism 'pleases us well' and he added that 'we desire to be further instructed by thee'. However, Grebel also opposed any use of violence, such as was being employed by the Peasants, arguing in the letter that 'the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves'. This letter to Müntzer never reached him, but it is significant that the Swiss Brethren, later to be known for their pacifism, looked to such a source.²⁷

It is also significant that as the reform proceeded in Zürich under the leadership of Zwingli, the issue of the payment of tithes came to the fore, as it had among the peasants. Some of the rural communities around the city demanded abolition of the tithes they paid to the city – in part because they did not like the pastors who were being paid from the tithes – and in this debate Zwingli and Conrad, who had been friends, found themselves on opposite sides. During the course of 1524, as Grebel's quarrel with the official church intensified, and he was denounced by the Zwinglian pastors, Grebel seems to have given up on the idea of a Christian Zürich. By late 1524 he saw Zwingli as a 'wretched prattler' and wrote regarding the Reformed community in the city, operating under Zwingli's leadership, that there were 'not twenty who believe the Word of God'.²⁸ At the same time, among those in rural communities around the city, especially in Zollikon, who were seeking to establish communities of baptised believers, there was interest in what this meant for community of goods. Klassen writes about this in *The Economics of Anabaptism*: 'Almost from its earliest days, Anabaptism included in its ranks those who wished to establish a community of believers in which private property would be abolished, and in which control of all temporal possessions would be surrendered voluntarily by the individual.'²⁹

²⁵ Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 9.

²⁶ Mantz is quoted by Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 97.

²⁷ Letter from Grebel to Müntzer, 5th September 1524, in W. Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 164, 267.

²⁸ Letter from Grebel to Vadian, 15th December 1524, in Leland Harder, ed., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press 1985), p. 301; Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, pp. 9-10.

²⁹ P.J. Klaassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism 1525–60* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 50.

The view of Klassen is justified, and needs to receive more attention. Johannes Kessler of the Swiss Brethren testified to what happened during the momentous events in Zollikon, as it became an Anabaptist centre: 'Now because most of Zollikon was rebaptised, they also undertook like the early Christians, to practice community of temporal goods... broke the locks off their doors, chests and cellars and ate food and drink in good fellowship without discord. But as in the time of the apostles, it did not last long.'³⁰ James Stayer gives the following vivid description of their practise of the 'community of goods', 'They broke the locks off their doors, chests, and cellars, and ate food and drink in good fellowship without discrimination.'³¹ In their work, Leonhard von Muralt and Walter Schmid confirm that the Swiss Brethren willingly shared their possessions with those who were in need.³²

Yet the Swiss Brethren denied almost all the time that they were teaching people 'community of goods', by which, as Cornel Ghita puts it, they meant 'that they did not teach a community of goods for society at large, that is, they did not teach that property should be forcibly taken from landowners and generally redistributed.'³³ They were, rather, talking about Christian love to one another as expressed in definite actions. Many times they confirmed that love was 'the basis of fellowship in the church, and that the practice of love made the sharing of material things a reality'.³⁴ The new goal was *Nahrung* – provision of the necessities of life without luxuries. In the words of Grebel: 'I do not admit that I ever taught that one should have to give his property to anybody for nothing.'³⁵ This, however, was not how others in the Reformation movements saw the situation. In Zwingli's Tract, *Concerning the Office of Preaching* (1525), which aimed to undermine the Anabaptist advance, he wrote that 'quiet Christians will find no pleasure in the Anabaptist cause because they see at once that the Anabaptists are aiming at community of goods and the abolition of government'.³⁶

³⁰ Harder, ed., *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, p. 345.

³¹ Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 96.

³² *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schwiez*, 1: Zurich, eds., Leonhard von Muralt and Walter Schmid (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag 1952), pp. 216-217, quoted in Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 97.

³³ Cornel Ghita, 'The significance in the early sixteenth century of the issue of "community of goods" and the diverse expressions of this practice in Anabaptist Groups', MTh essay unpublished (Prague: IBTS, 2000).

³⁴ W.R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 255.

³⁵ Quoted in Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 99.

³⁶ Harder, ed., *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, p. 409.

It seems, as Stayer suggests, that 'At this early stage in the Swiss Anabaptist movement we probably have the expression of an ideal for life among reformed Christians, an interpretation of the meaning of the Reformation, rather than an order for the life of a gathered, separated minority'.³⁷ According to 'community of goods' among the Swiss Brethren, each person needs to take care of the other – if she/he is hungry to feed her/him, if thirsty to give a drink. As they stated: 'For we are not masters of our goods but rather stewards and administrators. Certainly there is none of us who says that we should seize what belongs to someone else and make it common. Rather, when someone asks for your coat you should also give him your cloak.'³⁸ Communal property was encouraged, but not imposed on the members of the communities – they did not have to abandon their property. Swiss Brethren did legislate on several issues of economic behaviour, but they did not try to abolish private property.

There was in fact a reaction against any attempt to impose community of goods by violence and this reaction may be seen in *The Schleithem Confession*,³⁹ which came out of a conference held in February 1527 between Swiss and German Anabaptists at Schleithem on the border between the two countries.⁴⁰ A central figure was Michael Sattler, a former Benedictine Prior, who joined the Anabaptist movement in 1526.⁴¹ It is accepted that Sattler played a key role in the writing of the Confession and those who affirmed it went on to advocate its wider acceptance so that it became the standard Anabaptist statement of the movement's beliefs and principles. It focuses on the issues of baptism, excommunication, the breaking of bread, separatism, the appointment of ministers by local congregations, the sword and the oath. However, in the Congregational Order we read: 'Of all the brothers and sisters of this congregation none shall have anything of his own, but rather, as the Christians in the time of the apostles held all in common, and especially stored up a common fund, from which aid can be given to the poor, according as each will have need, and as in the apostles' time permit no brother to be in need.' But there is no evidence that the Swiss Brethren took any steps to establish communal modes of living. They replied to the charges about this at Frankenthal in 1570: 'We confess that Christians may have private property without

³⁷ Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁹ The text is in Baylor, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 172-81.

⁴⁰ Williams, *Radical Reformation*, pp. 289-94.

⁴¹ For his life see M. Haas, 'Michael Sattler: On the Way to Anabaptist Separation', in H.J. Goertz, ed., *Profiles of Radical Reformers* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1982), pp. 132-143.

violating Christian love, always with the provision that they do not misuse it but at all times let their abundance serve the needs of the poor.’⁴²

In this part of my paper I have shown that the Swiss Brethren understood ‘community of goods’ as an elimination of poverty through mutual aid. Yet, it was not compulsory among the Swiss to give private property away. It has often been seen as a very balanced view that provided a positive witness to the world, but did not force people into something that they did not want to do.

3. ‘Community of goods’ among the Hutterian Brethren

In the third part of my paper I will look at the Hutterian understanding and practice of the ‘community of goods’. In my opinion it was the most creative approach to this practice among the Anabaptists. On the one hand their main characteristic feature was that they had only common property – everything was shared among the members of the community. Moreover, they lived in a commune, thus not only sharing their possessions, but also working together. On the other hand no one was forced to do it; members of this community voluntarily came and decided to stay there. The Hutterian Brotherhood is named after Jakob Hutter who was martyred by being burned alive at the stake on 26th February 1536, at Innsbruck in the Tyrol.⁴³ Some of his most important work, however, was in Moravia. Here the various Anabaptist ideas about community of goods were debated. Hans Hut’s Augsburg congregation had decided in 1528 that property holders could not partake of the Lord’s Supper and he proposed this view in Moravia.⁴⁴ In Nikolsburg, Hut debated the issue with Balthasar Hubmaier, who had also been associated with the Peasants’ War and had given refuge to armed peasants.⁴⁵

Although Hubmaier had been part of the radical movement associated with the Swiss Brethren, he disagreed with many of them about whether Christians could take the sword. His belief was that to be a magistrate was a proper calling for a Christian. In March 1528 Leonhart von Lichtenstein, whom Hubmaier had brought into the Anabaptist movement, expelled the *Stabler* (peaceful staff-bearers) from Mikulov to another part of Moravia – Slavkov. There, a dramatic event took place, as

⁴² J.W. Fretz, ‘Brotherhood and the Economic Ethic of the Anabaptists’, in G.F. Hershberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), p. 199.

⁴³ J. Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren 1528 – 1931: A story of Martyrdom and Loyalty* (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1931), p. 1.

⁴⁴ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Radical Reformation*, p. 150.

recorded later: 'At that time these men spread out a cloak in front of the people and everyone placed their possessions on it, voluntarily and with a willing spirit, for the upkeep of the needy, according to the teaching of the prophets and the apostles'.⁴⁶ It was this communitarian group that Hutter joined and after some struggles about leadership he broke away with his followers from the main body to form what became the Hutterites. They expressed their faith in this way: 'We believe in a personal God; that Jesus Christ was his only begotten Son; that he came into the world to save humanity through the shedding of his blood on the cross. In all these things we agree with most evangelical churches. But if you meant to ask what distinguishes us from other evangelical churches, I should say: We believe in community of goods, and have all our property in common; we believe in nonresistance; we do not take oaths; we do not take or hold public office; and we baptize only upon profession of faith.'⁴⁷ Community of goods was a key interpretation of Jesus' teaching of brotherly love for Hutterities.

In the famous Hutterite *Chronicle* the main points of Hutterian belief were outlined. The members agreed and decided to follow several disciplines, namely, as they put it, how Christians should live within the apostolic faith. One of the key points addressed the issue of keeping Christian community, and they stated that, 'every brother and sister should be fully surrendered to God and to the church, in body and soul. All gifts received from God should be held in common, according to the practice of the first apostolic church community of Christ, so that the needy in the church can be supported. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 5:1-11.'⁴⁸ The whole church also was encouraged to look after the needs of the poor with great care, clearly practising 'community of goods'. Hutterian Brethren practised this 'community of goods' as – they believed – Jesus taught and lived himself with disciples and as the first apostolic church practised it. Those people who had been 'rich or poor now shared one purse, one house and one table – the healthy with the healthy, the sick with the sick, and the children with the children.'⁴⁹ Everywhere Hutterian Brethren claimed that 'Acts 2, 4 and 5 outlined the proper biblical economic order for a Christian community'.⁵⁰

Practising 'community of goods' was, therefore, one of the key convictions of this group of Anabaptist believers. There was an interesting

⁴⁶ Quoted in Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren*, p. 118.

⁴⁸ Hutterian Brethren, ed., *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren: Volume I* (New York: Plough Publishing House, 1987), p. 78.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

⁵⁰ Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 316.

procedure, which allowed new-comers to ‘taste’ the life in the commune, and after that to make a decision about their property. It had echoes of how someone might join a monastery. ‘Anyone who wished to join them had to hand in everything he owned. He was not compelled to do this immediately, however, but was given time to consider, from six months to a year, whatever seemed best.’ During this time a person could decide to stay or not, ‘he was quite free to leave and his property was returned’. But if someone wanted to leave after the declaration of intention to stay, ‘the property he had brought would not be returned to him; it would be kept as an offering for the upkeep of the brothers.’⁵¹ It is significant that the communities grew and spread.

Athough Jakob Hutter gave the name to the movement, two later leaders, Peter Walpot and Peter Riedemann, had a great deal to do with creating the theological approach, the economic system and the rules followed by the community.⁵² In his *Confession of Faith*, Riedmann argued that love for possessions was the inheritance of original sin. He wrote: ‘Now, he who thus becomes free from created things can then grasp what is true and divine, and when he grasps it and it becomes his treasure, he turns his heart towards it, empties himself of all else, and takes not as his, and regard it no longer as his but as of all God’s children.’⁵³ In his ‘Articles’ of 1577, Peter Walpot, to some extent, followed the ideas of Hans Hut and used 148 arguments for communal living. He concluded: ‘Only in a divinely created fellowship separated from the world can man succeed in living communally, and only in this way can God be properly honored, worshipped and obeyed.’⁵⁴ Here was the strongest possible argument for community of goods. As the communities grew and indeed prospered, this period became known as the ‘Golden Years’ of the Hutterites.⁵⁵

In this third part of my paper I have described Hutterian understanding of the ‘community of goods’. They had everything in common, took care of people who were in need and did not force people to do anything. Having looked at those who tried to force people in society at large to share their property and also at the Swiss Brethren who, as I have shown, helped people in various ways because they loved each other, I would argue that this third group of Anabaptists – the Hutterians – were, in

⁵¹ Hutterian Brethren, ed., *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren: Volume I*, p. 562.

⁵² Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, p. 144.

⁵³ P. Riedmann, *Confession of Faith* (Rifton: Plough Publishing House, 1970), p. 90.

⁵⁴ A.J. Hostler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 148.

⁵⁵ See the book with that name: L. Gross, *The Golden Years of the Hutterites* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1998).

a sense, in the middle, by having obligatorily everything in common among members but making clear that joining this congregation was voluntary.

Conclusion

Let me conclude my paper by saying that I have described only three radical groups in the period of the Reformation (I could have included others, but these three are very significant) and I have shown, in the case of each, that their understanding and teaching regarding 'community of goods' had specific significance. Definitely, 'community of goods' had great significance as a whole in the historical context. Estep wrote regarding Anabaptism: 'The community of goods became the indispensable mark of the true church.'⁵⁶ However, there were great differences. In the case of one stream – which has been seen as on the fringe of Anabaptism – there was a view that everyone was obligated to share their property with each other and anyone rejecting that would be under divine judgment and could be killed. The Swiss Brethren, in marked contrast, did not force people to have everything in common. They took care of the poor and believed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that believers would share everything they had with people who were in need on a voluntary basis. Concluding my paper, I turned to Hutterian Brethren who believed that the practice of the 'community of goods' was an integral part of brotherly love and that sharing everything with each other was an expression of discipleship. All members of their communities practised this love by having everything in common or sharing their property, and they did it with joy. This approach has, I believe, much to say to the church in today's world, a world which has been very much committed to individual material wealth but which is now having to look at the serious consequences of that system.

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⁵⁶ Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, p. 89.

Convictions, Scripture and Conflict: more questions than answers

David McMillan

The case for an investigation into the interpretation of Scripture and the moral reasoning of Christians in regard to the issues of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation during the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Introduction

A major part of Professor Steve Bruce's contribution to the understanding of the Northern Ireland conflict has been his sociologically counter-cultural approach to the role of religion in the conflict. He points out that the sociology taught in British universities in which he was schooled in the 1970s assumed that '... religion and nationalism, such powerful forces in the past, had been displaced in the modern world by social class. The sentiments and romantic loyalties that drove simpler people had been superseded by material interests.'¹

This assumption Bruce rejects and he clearly identifies, and understands, the dilemma faced by the academy in seeking to understand the significance or otherwise of religion in ethnic conflicts. The 'prejudice'² with which various sociological traditions come to the hermeneutical task of addressing ethnic conflicts inevitably affects, or even

¹ S. Bruce, *Paisley: Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. vii. More than a decade after the publication of *The Edge of the Union*, Bruce continues to revise his understanding of the role of religion in the formation of identity within the Protestant community of Northern Ireland. He argues that recent developments in which the Democratic Unionist Party, with its strong religious leadership in the form of the Revd Ian Paisley and close affiliation with various Evangelical churches and organisations, has finally become the largest party in Northern Ireland vanquishing the other expressions of 'secular' unionism, indicates that his observations on the significance of religio-ethnic identity may have been somewhat vindicated. See Bruce, *Paisley: Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland*, p. x. See also his comments in S. Bruce, *The Edge of the Union: The Ulster Loyalist Political Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. vi.

² I am here using the term 'prejudice' as articulated by Gadamer. Gadamer, building on Heidegger's insights into the fore-structure of understanding which Gadamer describes as 'a completely correct phenomenological description of what is always present in the taken-for-grantedness of meaning'. H.G. Gadamer, J. Weinsheimer, and D.G. Marshall, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., Continuum Impacts (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 272. Gadamer rehabilitates the notion of prejudice as a condition of understanding, freeing it from the negative connotations laid upon it by the Enlightenment. Gadamer's comment that 'The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness' applies equally well to the sociological analysis of ethnic conflict situations in which the role of religion, where present, is overlooked or ignored. Gadamer, et al, *Truth and Method*, p. 276.

determines, the resultant exegesis of the social text before them, an exegesis which tends to down-play, or possibly ignore, the role of religion.

No serious commentator considers the conflict in Northern Ireland to have been a religious war. However Mitchell argues strongly that ‘...religion is much more socially and politically significant than many commentators have presumed’.³ Mitchell’s investigation of the role of religion includes a consideration of ‘Theology and Politics’ in which she states, ‘Theologies must always be seen as constructed in particular times, places and historical contexts. They reflect as well as help create political ideas and behaviours. ...theology and politics are mutually conditioning. Each informs the other in a complex two-way relationship.’⁴

The questions raised by sociologists such as Bruce and Mitchell on the relationship between theology and politics have all too often been the very issues that Christians in Northern Ireland have failed to address.⁵ However, it is not just the question of the relationship between religion and politics that requires investigation but also the hermeneutics at play underlying those relationships that needs to be understood. After setting out something of the context of faith and identity in Northern Ireland this paper will argue that there is a way to explore and to understand the hermeneutics at work, in the Christian community in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and will propose that consideration of the role of convictions in the moral reasoning and practices of Christians during the conflict may provide fresh insight on this issue.

It will argue that models of moral reasoning which take seriously the role of convictions may provide help in understanding the conflict that arises between convictions and the interpretation of Scripture that come to the fore in a context of social conflict, and that there is a viable methodological approach to uncover and a theological basis on which to

³ C. Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 1. Mitchell argues that the political significance of religion in the Northern Ireland conflict is to be seen in terms of: 1. Power relationships; 2. A social and ethnic boundary marker; 3. Providing the resources to distinguish who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ in terms of group membership; 4. A means of shaping communal identification of self and other; 5. Providing, through theology and doctrine, the meaning underlying group identity. Mitchell sees these as overlapping categories and has provided one of the most comprehensive accounts of the role of religion in the Northern Ireland conflict within the sociological tradition.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131-2.

⁵ One public expression of the need for such questions to be addressed was seen in the introduction to ECONI, ‘For God and His Glory Alone’, ed., ECONI (Belfast: ECONI, 1988). It states that because of ‘The identification of Christianity with a particular political outlook by both sides of the community ... Instead of Christians being able to comment freely on the political order and to offer Biblical insights, we often reflect the divisions in our society. As a result we become part of the disease and are therefore unable to be part of the cure.’ ECONI stands for ‘Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland’. ECONI’s publications were clearly welcomed by some and fiercely denounced by others.

judge what Christians have been saying and doing in practice in regard to the ethics of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation at a particular moment in the forty-year period of conflict. If such a task is successful it may provide the basis for establishing transferable Christian practices of interpretation of Scripture and Christian living that make for peace in situations of conflict.

Faith and Identity in Northern Ireland

Virtually every child growing up in Northern Ireland in the forty years between 1968⁶ and 2008 is acutely aware from an early age that they are either a Catholic or a Protestant, a Nationalist or a Unionist, Irish or British with the religious affiliation tending to mirror the political affiliation and sense of national identity.

Marianne Elliott, a member of the independent Opsahl Commission,⁷ records the shift, or hardening, of the sense of identity among Protestants and Catholics during the first twenty years of the 'troubles'. In 1968 20% of Protestants in Northern Ireland considered themselves as Irish, 39% as

⁶ J. Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, New updated edition. ed. (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2005), sets out the events of 1968 in which he traces the political turmoil emerging in Northern Ireland. He records how, at the same time as protests were taking place against Soviet occupation in Prague; against the Vietnam War; the student uprising in Paris and black civil rights demonstrations in the USA; protests were beginning in Londonderry over the discriminatory housing policies of the Unionist Council in the city. Bardon records how things were brought to a head in June 1968 over the preferential allocation of a house to a Protestant, Miss Emily Beattie, in a Co Tyrone village called Caledon. Protest meetings and action snowballed after a nationalist MP in the Stormont government made the matter public and on 24th August 1968, 'some 2,500 people assembled in Coalisland, out-numbering the town's population by two to one'. Ibid., p. 652. The intention of the crowd – the early expression of what was to become the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association – was to march to the nearby town of Dungannon in protest at the discrimination in housing allocation in Northern Ireland. A group of around 1,500 Protestant loyalists armed with clubs and staves and led by the Revd Ian Paisley blocked the way and the two groups were kept apart by around 400 police. The stand-off was ugly and was the first of several such demonstrations, counter demonstrations and heavy handed policing against the Civil Rights marchers in the autumn of 1968. Bardon says, 'During most of October and November Northern Ireland was in ferment'. Ibid., p. 656. After direct appeals to the community by the Prime Minister of the Stormont government on 9th December, calm returned to the country. 'Northern Ireland was at peace but only a few days into the new year action taken by the People's Democracy and its opponents bleakly demonstrated how ephemeral that peace was to be.' Bardon, Ibid., p. 658. What followed the events of 1968 was to become euphemistically known as the 'troubles', escalating into the IRA campaign until the first of the ceasefires in 1994 and beginning of the ongoing peace process. For texts in addition to Bardon which give an overview of Irish history and the background to the events prior to 1968 see J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (Faber, 1966). and A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground: The Roots of Conflict in Ulster*, rev. ed. (London: Faber, 1989).

⁷ The Opsahl Commission was established in 1993 under the leadership of Torkel Opsahl, an international human rights lawyer. 'The Commission was a novel exercise in democracy, which sought to involve the people of Northern Ireland in the debate about its future. It received submissions from some 3,000 people and held public meetings and oral hearings throughout the region'. See M. Elliott and University of Liverpool, Institute of Irish Studies, *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland: Peace Lectures from the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 169.

British and 32% as Ulster.⁸ After twenty years of civil unrest and conflict, in 1989, only 3% of Protestants considered themselves Irish with 69% identifying themselves as British, 10% as Ulster and 16% now as Northern Ireland.⁹

A more subtle shift in the sense of identity took place among the Catholic community over the same period. In 1968, while 76% perceived themselves as Irish, 20% considered themselves as British and 5% as Ulster. By 1989 only 8% of Catholics in Northern Ireland considered themselves British but interestingly only 60% considered themselves to be Irish with 25% identifying with the same term Northern Irish as some moderate Protestants. A mere 2% were willing to identify with the term Ulster.¹⁰ Mitchell records the statistics from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey of 2003 which show only marginal change in the figures quoted above for 1989.¹¹

Clearly, during the period of conflict, religious and national identity became more firmly entrenched and distinct between the communities.¹² Meantime throughout the conflict, the various church bodies and para-church religious groups have had much to say about the unfolding situation.¹³ Often it has been the case that the sense of pastoral responsibility in a time of conflict to the community to which a church

⁸ Ulster is the name of an ancient province of Ireland encompassing the same geographical region as Northern Ireland and adopted by the Protestant and Unionist community as a way of identifying the Irish element of their Britishness without the danger of being perceived as Irish in the sense used by the Catholic and Nationalist community.

⁹ The use of Northern Ireland as an identity indicator is another subtlety which allowed those of a more moderate Protestant/Unionist position to maintain the Irish element of their Britishness as opposed to using the term 'Ulster' which was becoming increasingly used by and associated with those of a more militant and even violent Unionist position. For an extended discussion on this change in sense of identity see chapter 3 of P. Mitchell, *Evangelicalism and National Identity in Ulster, 1921-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Elliott and University of Liverpool, Institute of Irish Studies, *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland: Peace Lectures from the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University*, p.170.

¹¹ Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief*, p. 29.

¹² D. De Bréadún, *The Far Side of Revenge: Making Peace in Northern Ireland*, new updated ed. (Cork: Collins Press, 2008), p. 2. In his voluminous work on the Peace Process De Breadun can legitimately summarise the situation in two sentences; 'The population of Northern Ireland was 1.68 million in the 2001 census. The religious breakdown of that figure is almost 900,000 Protestants, the vast majority of whom wish to retain the British link, and 740,000 Catholics, who would mostly prefer a united Irish state.'

¹³ The Presbyterian Board of Social Witness and the Presbyterian General Assembly; the Synod of the Church of Ireland through its Bishops and committees; *Search The Church of Ireland Journal*; the Methodist Church in Ireland; The Catholic Church in Ireland; various interchurch ecumenical groups such as 'The Faith and Politics Group'; Evangelical groups such as ECONI and Caleb and many of the smaller Christian denominations issued statements from time to time on specific incidents, political developments and Christian responsibility.

belongs has overridden its prophetic role of challenging the behaviour and attitudes of its members.

For example, a report to the 1993 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland acknowledged twenty five years on, and for the first time, the shared guilt of the Presbyterian Church in the discrimination against Catholics, endemic in the State of Northern Ireland, in the 1960s. Commenting on the report the Revd Dr John Dunlop, a major figure in Irish Presbyterianism said, ‘...it is ...regrettable that there was neither sufficient grace nor political will to offer generosity across these divisions when it was required. The whole community failed, in 1968 and thereafter...’¹⁴

Throughout the twenty five years from 1968 – 1993 the churches in Northern Ireland were well attended.¹⁵ The decline in church membership and attendance that was, at the same time, growing apace in the rest of the United Kingdom was unknown in Northern Ireland until the early 1990s. But, with full churches, open Bibles and daily violence the process of peacemaking was painfully slow.¹⁶

Convictions and moral reasoning

Gadamer sees hermeneutics as universal¹⁷ and in the context of his challenge of Enlightenment epistemology Gadamer develops the concept of ‘historically effected consciousness’¹⁸ which, he argues, means that the concept of pure objective knowledge, or reasoning, is a ‘chimera’.¹⁹

Life, according to Gadamer, is lived and understood within historically effected boundaries, or horizons, and he sees the development

¹⁴ J. Dunlop, *A Precarious Belonging: Presbyterians and the Conflict in Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1995), p. 56-7.

¹⁵ Mitchell records that in 1968 95% of Catholics and 46% of Protestants attended church at least once every week. By 2003 the figures were 60% for Catholics and 34% for Protestants. Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief*, p. 24.

¹⁶ The most comprehensive account of the development of the Northern Ireland Peace Process is to be found in, E. Mallie and D. McKittrick, *The Fight for Peace: The Secret Story Behind the Irish Peace Process* (London: Heinemann, 1996). They document the role of a number of unique Christian Clergy who were deeply involved in the early days of the Peace Process, particularly that of Father Alec Reid (Catholic) and the Revds Ken Newell and Roy Magee (Presbyterian).

¹⁷ J. Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Yale Studies in Hermeneutics (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 121-2 Grondin explains that Gadamer’s concept of universality is not a claim that is being made about his (Gadamer’s) position or views but that, ‘... hermeneutic inquiry cannot be limited to the ancillary problem of devising a methodology for the human sciences. ...[but] ...becomes the central occupation of philosophy’.

¹⁸ Gadamer et al, *Truth and Method*, p. 300. Gadamer says, ‘When a naïve faith in scientific method denies the existence of effective history, there can be an actual deformation of knowledge’.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 370.

of understanding as ‘...the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves’.²⁰ As he develops his argument Gadamer comes to the conclusion that ‘...the fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language’.²¹ Consequently, the last section of *Truth and Method* is entirely devoted to a discussion of ‘Language as the medium of hermeneutic experience’ and the section is prefaced with a quotation from Schleiermacher: ‘Everything presupposed in hermeneutics is but language’.²²

Discussing the relevance of Aristotelian thought and the recovery of the significance of tradition,²³ Gadamer argues that while Aristotle was not contending with the issues of hermeneutics, nevertheless, there was much to be learned from his understanding of the relationships between reason and moral action. Gadamer sees the value in Aristotle’s approach in his being ‘...concerned with reason and with knowledge, not detached from a being that is becoming, but determined by it and determinative of it’.²⁴ Hence, Gadamer’s view that philosophical ethics should not be consumed by the search for knowledge of a historical or theoretical nature but rather ‘by outlining phenomena helps moral consciousness to attain clarity concerning itself’.²⁵

It is part of Gadamer’s significant contribution that he brings to the discussion of hermeneutics and ethics a recovered awareness that moral understanding is not knowledge achieved by standing over against a situation as some kind of neutral observer. A person (or investigator) is shaped and formed by the history or tradition which they inhabit and whatever else they seek to understand is itself located within a history or tradition. Furthermore, he establishes that the role of language is critical in the process of shaping and understanding the world and not merely as a tool for the communication of ideas or findings.

On another continent and also influenced and shaped by reflecting on the nature of language, McClendon and Smith explore the usefulness of

²⁰ Ibid., p. 305.

²¹ Ibid., p. 370.

²² Ibid., p. 383 ff. Grondin says of Gadamer, ‘he makes language the essence of hermeneutics’. Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 106.

²³ Gadamer et al, *Truth and Method*, p. 308. Gadamer’s appreciation of the significance of tradition begins in ‘...Heidegger’s analysis of the hermeneutics of facticity. We showed that understanding is not a method which the inquiring consciousness applies to an object it chooses and so turns it into objective knowledge; rather, being situated within an event of tradition, a process of handing down, is a prior condition of understanding.’

²⁴ Ibid., p. 310.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 311.

J.L. Austin's work on language. They conclude that the means of discerning the significance of language can be summarised thus:

saying something, talking, speech in the full sense that saying something is a way of acting meaningfully, is to be understood in terms of the crucial significance of the speech-act (Austin's 'illocutionary act'), rather than in terms of the sentential act or the perlocutionary act.²⁶

Having established that speech is about 'acting meaningfully' they go on to consider the conditions by which a statement can be successfully meaningful or 'happy'.²⁷ While hardly a phrase Gadamer would have used, there is, nevertheless, unity in appreciation of the significance of language in determining meaning and understanding:

Language is no mere epiphenomenon, the verbal cherry on the sundae of life. It is the very stuff of which the sundae is made.²⁸

McClendon and Smith are working from the premise that convictions²⁹ are what 'make people what they are'.³⁰ Their definition of such fundamental beliefs, or convictions, is:

A conviction (as we use the term) means a persistent belief such that if X (a person or community) has a conviction it will not easily be relinquished and it cannot be relinquished without making X a significantly different person (or community) than before.³¹

Furthermore, their reasoning is that convictions are revealed by language where language is understood as an action. This view seems very much in keeping with the biblical notion that expressions of faith must be expressed in deeds or such expressions have no justification at all.³²

If the discussion by McClendon and Smith of happy speech-acts, Beth, American football and Aleph, seems somewhat esoteric, it is ultimately grounded in their contention that the most productive approach

²⁶ J.W. McClendon and J.M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 52. A 'sentential act' is simply to say something while an 'illocutionary act', a 'speech act', is a statement moving things along or that makes something happen. A 'perlocutionary act' is to produce or cause some additional unintended effect as a consequence of the 'illocutionary act' or statement. McClendon and Smith illustrate the subtleties of the meanings of these three terms by using illustrations from American football with the attendant risk of confusing rather than illuminating their meaning for someone conversant only with soccer!

²⁷ Ibid., p. 57. McClendon and Smith set out: the Preconditions; the Primary conditions; the Representative or descriptive conditions; the Affective or psychological conditions of a happy speech act.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁹ J.W. McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol.1*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), p. 22. McClendon says in *Ethics*, 'My convictions are the gutsy beliefs that I live out – or in failing to live them out, I betray myself'.

³⁰ McClendon and Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, p. 7.

³¹ Ibid., p. 5.

³² See James 2:18-19.

to discerning and evaluating (justifying or rejecting) the convictions of any given community, or its conviction sets,³³ is to investigate the nature and role of the language of convictions in and of the community within the context of its own story,³⁴ rather than work on the assumption that one can merely collect facts about phenomena and generate theories as a means of meaningfully investigating the reality of any given situation.

It is the development of the concept of convictions set in the broader context of consideration of speech-acts, narrative (the story formed nature of a community) and tradition that endues McClendon and Smith's approach with roundedness and suitability for use as an investigative methodology and not just theoretical abstraction. While *Convictions* was published before³⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*,³⁶ there is much of mutual confirmation in their approaches to understanding the context of how moral reasoning is conducted. Indeed McClendon later makes use of MacIntyre's philosophical reflections on 'tradition'³⁷ and in particular his work on traditions and practices³⁸ to further develop his argument with regard to the crucial nature of convictions.

This engagement with MacIntyre's thinking is supported by Murphy who reinforces the location of identity and moral consciousness within story formed traditions and comments that the delineation of MacIntyre's

³³ McClendon and Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, p. 91. McClendon and Smith argue that the total set of convictions held by an individual or a community form a 'conviction set' which is what determines the nature and practices of the individual or community. Ibid., p.99, McClendon and Smith argue that what they can '...definitionally say is that the glue that binds convictions into a single set is their mutual relation to the life of the person or (normally) the life of the community in which he or she shares. The unity of conviction sets is the rough but vital unity of shared life, the narrative in which they cohere.'

³⁴ McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol.1*, p. 24. In a discussion of the definition of 'theology', McClendon emphasises the importance of recognising that theology has to be understood in the context of, '...some historical narrative (discovering the actual convictions of a given community in their setting in the ongoing community story) ...'. Later McClendon discusses the importance of MacIntyre's contribution to the discussion of virtue and moral reasoning and says, 'The concepts of action, ...the identity of the self, narrative, history and tradition fit together and require one another for their own intelligibility.' Ibid., p. 176. Chapter 12 of *Ethics* is devoted to discussion of the significance of 'narrative' in understanding ethics and argues that 'narrative ethics, which is the regular ethics of every story-formed Christian community, cannot be replaced by a reduced, nonnarrative ethics of principles'. Ibid., p. 343.

³⁵ McClendon and Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*. p. 175.

³⁶ A.C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). MacIntyre's work, as to some degree Gadamer's, draws heavily on Aristotelian concepts. In the Postscript to the Second Edition MacIntyre comments, 'It scarcely needs repeating that it is the central thesis of *After Virtue* that the Aristotelian moral tradition is the best example we possess of a tradition whose adherents are rationally entitled to a high measure of confidence in its epistemological and moral resources'. Ibid., p. 277.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 222. MacIntyre says '...the history of each of our own lives is generally and characteristically embedded in and made intelligible in terms of the larger and longer histories of a number of traditions'.

³⁸ McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol.1*, pp. 166-167.

‘...set of concepts (*virtue, practice, narrative, tradition*) ...offer the best available resources for making and justifying first-order Christian ethical claims’.³⁹ And, while Kallenberg is not unaware of limitations in MacIntyre’s arguments,⁴⁰ nevertheless he too concurs with the understanding that moral reasoning is not meaningfully divorced from ‘those practices, narratives and tradition in which we locate ourselves’.⁴¹ McClendon and Smith (later developed by McClendon in, for example, *Ethics*) have, in my opinion, constructed a methodology which allows us to enable ‘moral consciousness to attain clarity concerning itself’.⁴²

The challenge, which they successfully meet through their work, is to be able to investigate and understand the conviction sets of a community and be able to assess the ‘...justification of convictions, especially religious convictions’.⁴³ This is a methodology which facilitates rational reflection on moral reasoning without the pretence or self deceit that knowledge can be gained in some objective detached manner as if one approached the task without prejudice and that the issues could be dislocated from their situatedness.⁴⁴ In addition, it necessitates that the researcher respects their own ‘otherness’ as an investigator – as someone located within a different narrative and tradition – and demands that the research is conducted with humility while having a means of working with primary sources that have a measure of objectivity (working with a framework of justifications) without imperialist or relativist hermeneutical notions.⁴⁵

³⁹ N.C. Murphy, B.J. Kallenberg and M. Nation, *Virtues & Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), p. 30.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 19ff.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴² Gadamer et al, *Truth and Method*, p. 311.

⁴³ McClendon and Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, p. 17. This theme is developed later in Chapter 4 of McClendon and Smith when they succinctly summarise their position by saying, ‘Thus with a few appropriate changes, the apparatus of appraisal that applies to utterances applies to beliefs and thoughts as well. To be able to understand what anyone says is to be able to understand what that person thinks; the unhappiness of what he or she says or can say shows the justifiability or the unjustifiability of what he or she believes also.’ Ibid., p. 83. See also their comments on p. 195, ‘Our work may be called philosophy of religion ...because it seeks to show what kinds of speech acts religious speakers perform, what sort of belief a conviction is, how the former may be found happy, or how the latter may be justified.’ Elsewhere McClendon says, ‘certain aspects of the general structure of language may provide us with a way to understand the structure of convictions generally and the intellectual tools with which we analyze language are or correspond to those with which we discover the shape of particular human character and particular human community.’ J.W. McClendon, *Biography as Theology; How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 164.

⁴⁴ MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 212. MacIntyre argues that our own lives are lived out and understood in the context of narratives and therefore ‘...the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told ...’

⁴⁵ See McClendon and Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, p. 8, for discussion of the terms *imperialism* and *relativism* in this context.

Models of Moral Reasoning

Parushev concludes his reflections on the processes of moral thinking with the statement that ‘Convictions constitute a particular perspective – a way of seeing things – that profoundly affects one’s way of thinking having a bottom up causative effect on the process of reasoning.’⁴⁶ His own reasoning is in line with the work of Stassen and Gushee⁴⁷ who in turn acknowledge the work of Aiken and Gustafson in regard to understanding how moral norms are formed.⁴⁸

Stassen and Gushee would argue that the particular moral judgements we may make are informed by rules, which in turn are informed by principles underlying which, they would argue, are convictions. When we have excavated to the bottom stratum of moral reasoning we discover we have reached the ‘convictional level’.⁴⁹ It is a fundamental part of Stassen and Gushee’s critique of philosophical ethics that without a theological convictional basis it is ultimately impossible to get below the principles level of moral reasoning and provide sustainable or satisfactory explanations of the principles adopted.⁵⁰

Stassen and Gushee’s work, to which we shall return, is based on work carried out by Stassen in the 1970s in which Stassen was seeking to develop a social theory model that could be used in evaluating social policy decision making⁵¹ by refining the work of Ralph Potter (following Aiken) in which he had proposed a four dimensional approach to moral reasoning. Potter’s four dimensions addressed the ‘...empirical, theological, loyalties and moral reasoning dimensions...’.⁵² Stassen argued that the level of complication Potter built into the subdivisions of his quadrilateral structure rendered it largely unworkable and unwieldy, yet Stassen recognised something of significance and value in the model Potter proposed. Working with the four levels of reasoning⁵³ proposed by Potter, Stassen then sharpened the focus by proposing four variables within each of the four

⁴⁶ P.R. Parushev, ‘Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning’, in *Ethical Thinking at the Crossroads of European Reasoning*, eds., P.R. Parushev, O. Creanga, B. Brock (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), p. 44. An amended version of this paper is published also as the ‘Chapter One: Patterns of Academic Reasoning’, in P.R. Parushev and R.G. Grams, eds., *Academic Reasoning, Research and Writing: A Concise Handbook* (edition Librix.eu, Brno: Tribun EY, 2008), pp. 7-21.

⁴⁷ G.H. Stassen and D.P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵¹ G.H. Stassen, ‘Social Theory Model for Religious Social Ethics’, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 5 (1977).

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵³ In the 1970s Stassen used the term ‘ground-of-meaning’ rather than ‘convictions’ which he subsequently adopts from the work of McClendon and Smith whose work was published later.

levels with the effect of creating ‘...a schematic depiction of the elements entailed in justifying a decision or a policy’.⁵⁴

It is to this model that Stassen returns and refines in his work with Gushee when seeking to define the nature and shaping of ‘Character Ethics’.⁵⁵ Stassen and Gushee not only elaborate on the nature of each of the four sections of their model but enter into a dialogue with critics and other ethicists in defence of their model and argue that the structure they propose allows for meaningful social analysis, which, they argue, is an essential accompaniment to any narrative interpretation of moral reasoning.⁵⁶

Parushev brings together the work of Murphy⁵⁷ (following Toulmin) in regard to the structure of argumentation and Stassen’s motivational grounding of an argument (see Figure 1)⁵⁸ to produce a provisional holistic model of moral reasoning. However, Parushev holds that McClendon and Smith’s contribution on convictions⁵⁹ must be factored into any truly holistic model of moral reasoning and proposes an amended model from that based on Murphy and Stassen (see Figure 2).⁶⁰ Parushev understands Stassen’s ‘loyalties, trusts, interests and passions’ as part of an ‘Organic & Communal Convictional Sphere’ that is, convictions formed by relationships with my and other communities, while Stassen’s ‘Basic Convictions’ (see Figure 1) Parushev summarises as an ‘Anastatic Convictional Sphere’.⁶¹ It is these two spheres that feed into our convictions from which flow our perspective (Stassen’s ‘Way of Seeing’) and ultimately from these our way of reasoning.

⁵⁴ Stassen, ‘Social Theory Model for Religious Social Ethics’, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, p. 59.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁵⁷ N.C. Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994).

⁵⁸ Parushev, ‘Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning’, p. 29.

⁵⁹ P.R. Parushev, ‘Walking in the Dawn of the Light: On the Salvation Ethics of the Ecclesial Communities in the Orthodox Tradition from a Radical Reformation Perspective’ (Thesis (PhD), Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 2006), p. 6. Parushev identifies his agreement with the emphasis on convictions in moral reasoning when he comments that ‘James Wm McClendon, Jr and James M. Smith systematically define a person’s formative beliefs, instrumental for the task of hermeneutics, in terms of convictions and their irreplaceable importance for the task of philosophy and theology as “theoretic” of other disciplines.’ In P.R. Parushev, ‘Parushev states ‘Convictions are about who we (individually or communally) are. This is not detached analysis. We are entering deeply into the story of the person.’

⁶⁰ Parushev, ‘Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning’, p. 37.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37. Parushev follows McClendon in the use of the term ‘anastatic’ as a variant on the Greek term *anastasis* meaning resurrection. For McClendon the resurrection is the critical event in shaping the nature of Christian ethics in which ‘an eschatological hope had become a present reality’, McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol.*, p. 252. The term is useful when understood in this sense to speak of the eschatological hope that shapes the present reality of deeply held convictions.

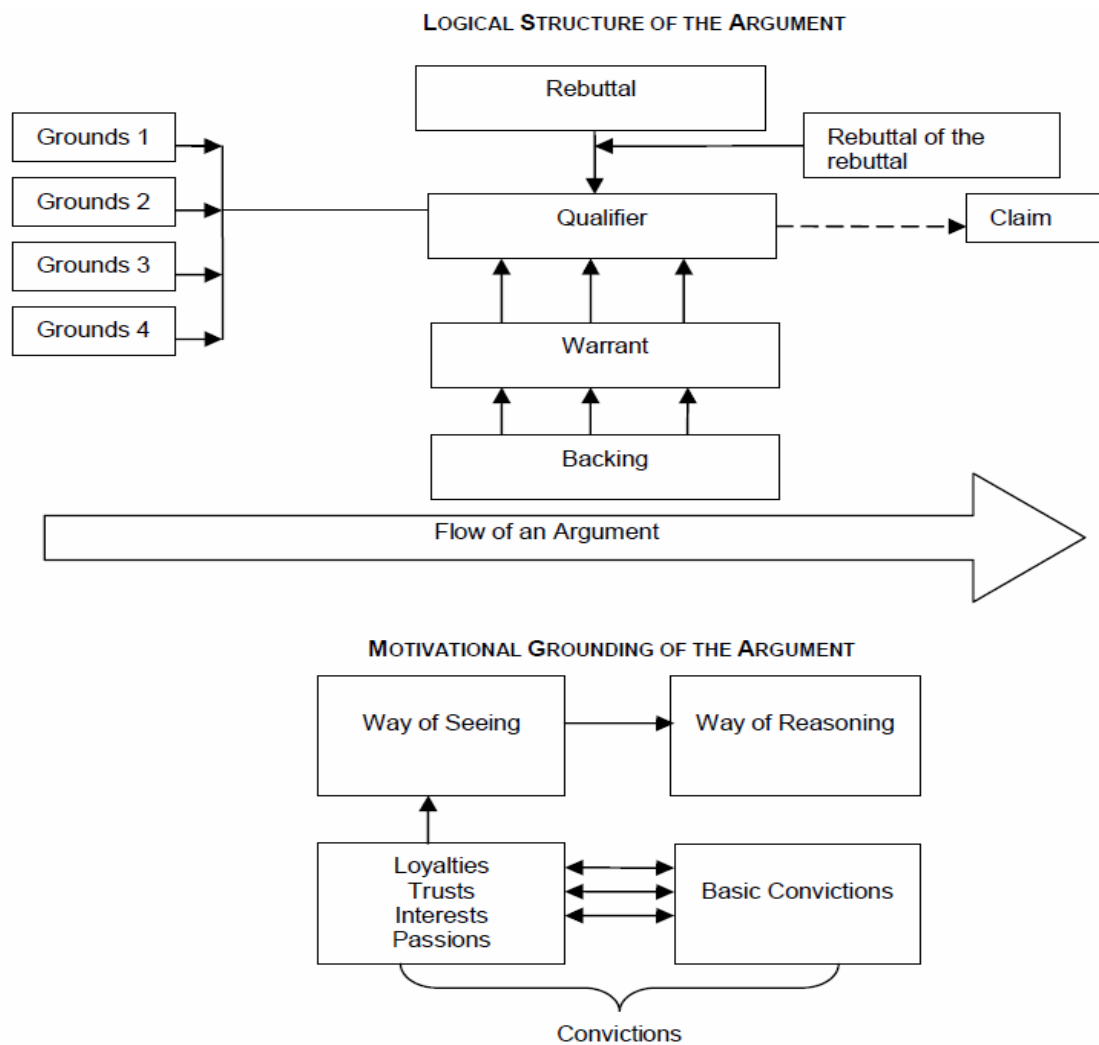


Figure 1

The revision is more than cosmetic. While taking full cognisance of the role of narrative and tradition in the formation of convictions Parushev is seeking to demonstrate the ‘...bottom up causative effect on the process of reasoning’ and that, ‘A holistic approach to moral reasoning requires careful attention to the convictional grounding as much as to the logical structure of an argument.’⁶²

⁶² Ibid., pp. 44 and 45.

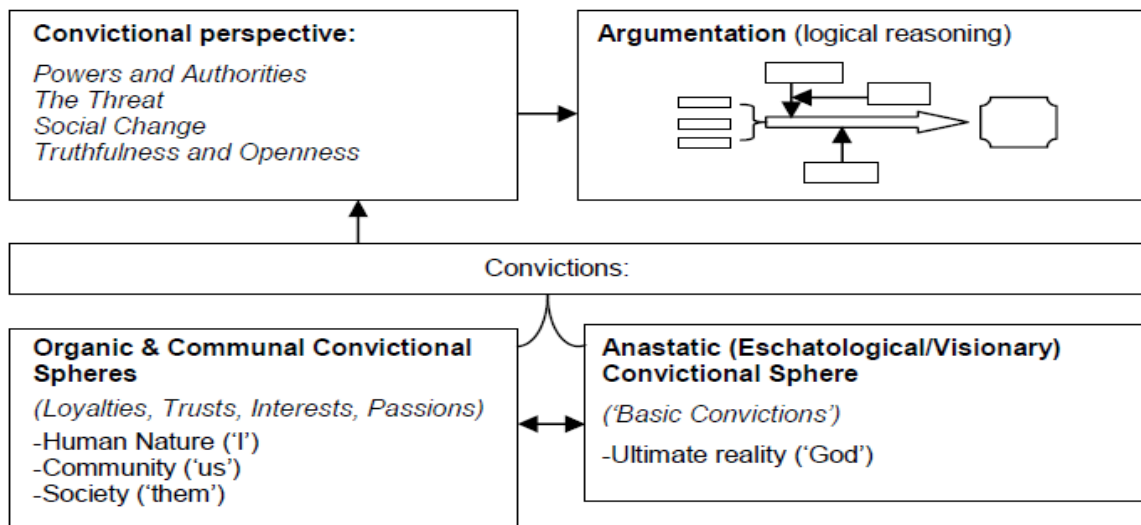


Figure 2

Parushev's model of moral reasoning has the potential to provide a means of investigating the various factors that contribute to the moral reasoning and interpretative practices in regard to Scripture of Christians in Northern Ireland during the conflict. This is particularly the case, given that Parushev's model is predicated upon the notion that, 'The contextual nature of convictions formed by community makes them subtle and invisible, unless they are forcefully called out by a moral or theological crisis',⁶³ which is very much the case in the Northern Ireland conflict situation.

There is, however, one area of weakness in Parushev's model that requires attention for our purposes of understanding the dynamic at work in a conflict situation. While Parushev, as well as Stassen and Gushee,⁶⁴ recognise a feedback mechanism into the process of moral reasoning (see Figure 3 for Stassen's original model with an indicative but imprecise feedback mechanism),⁶⁵ neither addresses directly how an argument, claim or decision flowing from deeply held convictions may play back into the reshaping, strengthening or undermining of those same convictions in a conflict situation.⁶⁶ Figure 4 makes a provisional suggestion for a means of

⁶³ Parushev, 'East and West: A Theological Conversation'.

⁶⁴ Parushev has an extended section on 'Expressing Convictions' and raises the question: 'How do my community or communities of belonging communicate their formative convictions to the communities around us and to the world at large?', offering some constructive suggestions mainly from a missional perspective. 'Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning', pp. 40-44.

⁶⁵ Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, especially pp. 59 and 68.

⁶⁶ Just as McClendon and Smith explore, using Beth, American football and Aleph, what happens when a speech-act occurs, so it is necessary to give consideration to the illocutionary or perlocutionary effects of a claim or statement of moral reasoning. The task of adjudication on the justification or otherwise of the statement is but one part of the overall task for our purposes. The question remains, what effect does a justified or unjustified statement or belief have on the individual or community from which it is uttered and/or the individuals or community to whom it is uttered?

understanding the reflective nature of what happens when ‘...convictions ...are forcefully called out by a convictional crisis’.⁶⁷

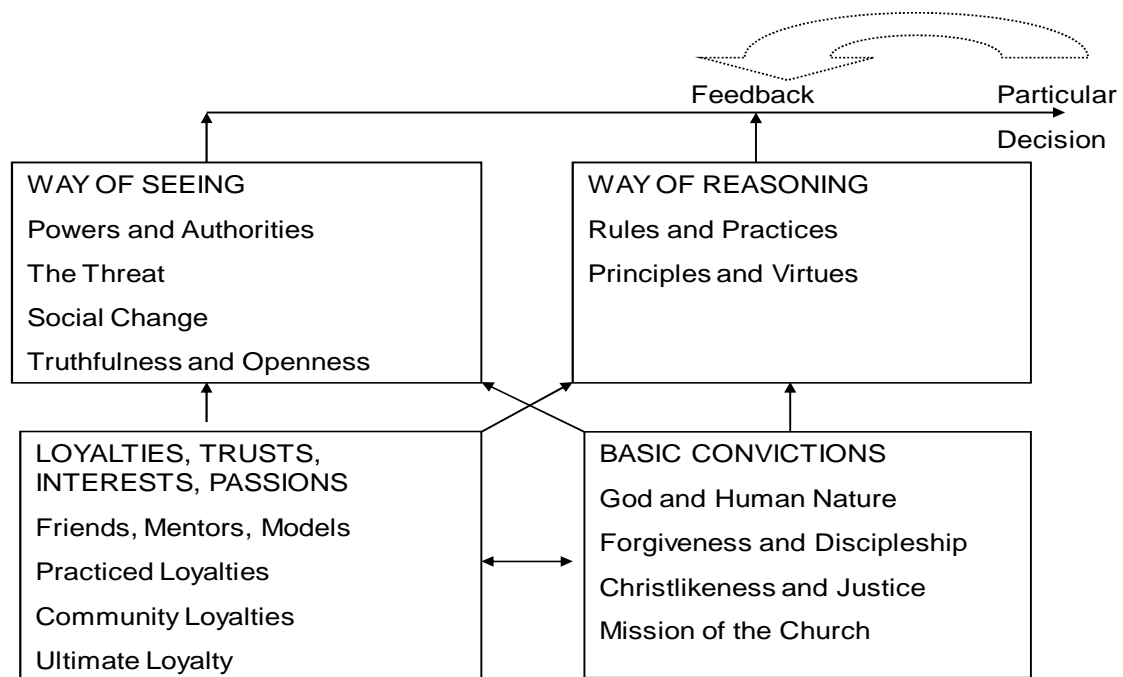


Figure 3

There are occasions, even in the context of conflict, in which moral reasoning based on deeply held convictions may be set in a Benign context. One can think of clerical fraternals, political party meetings, Sunday morning sermons – contexts in which moral reasoning, logical argumentation and/or the retelling of a formative narrative based on deeply held convictions, as outlined by Parushev, tend to play back into the sphere of the Convictional perspective but provide no challenge to or crisis for the convictions themselves. Such reasoning serves the purpose of reinforcing the prevailing notions of threat, authority etc. However, when the claims of moral reasoning are set into a Contested context – public debate, political rivalry, strong theological disagreement – some kind of feedback can be expected at the level of convictions. The challenge raises questions about the convictions: do they hold up, do they require strengthening in the light of the competing claims and reasoning, are they reinforced and thereby reinforce the Convictional perspective and feed back into the restatement with renewed vigour (or passion) of the same claims and reasoning?

⁶⁷ Parushev, 'Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning', p. 39.

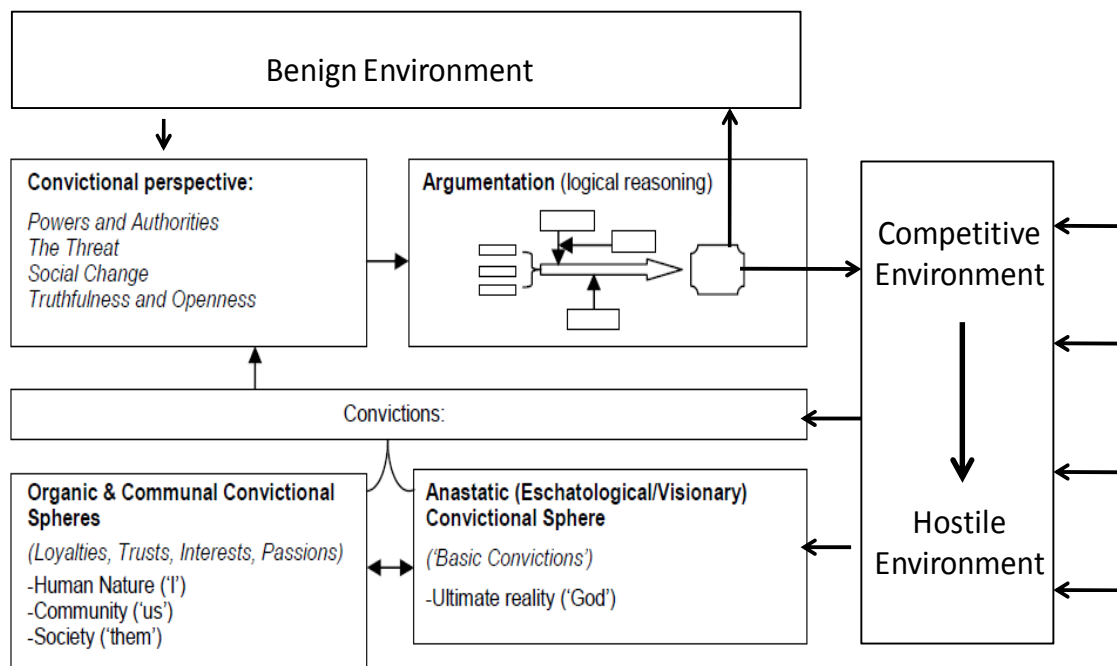


Figure 4

Consider, however, what happens when claims or reasoning are set in a Hostile context, a context in which people are being killed, property destroyed and identity threatened, a context of funerals and graveside orations, a context of perpetual fear and hostility. Precisely because claims and moral reasoning are drawn from deeply held communal and anastatic spheres there can be no indifference to how they are received, rebutted or rejected by the ‘enemy’. For a crucial claim or form of reasoning that is fundamental to the self-understanding of an individual or community to be undermined by the enemy is to lose face or possibly even to lose the war. When so much is at stake it would be reasonable to assume that the feedback in the cycle enters at the Communal and Anastatic spheres, either undermining, revising or reinforcing these elements of basic convictions and contributing to the often intractable nature of conflict.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ While much of the discussion in regard to conflict resolution is predicated on concepts of ‘culture’, J. P. Lederach, in advocating models of ‘peace building’ – as opposed to interventionist conflict resolution – recognises the deep convictional issues (though not the term he uses) that need to be addressed in the process. ‘...dynamics and patterns, driven by real life experiences, subjective perceptions and emotions, render rational and mechanical processes and solutions aimed at conflict resolution not only ineffective, but in many settings irrelevant or offensive’. J.P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997). For further discussion on these issues see K. Avruch, *Culture & Conflict Resolution* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), especially pp. 24-25 and 73-74; also, Marc Howard Ross, *The Management of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 164-166.

As noted above, this suggestion is provisional, but given the opportunity to be tested both theoretically against the work of scholars and practically in the field of research, it may prove to be a useful contribution to the understanding of a ‘hermeneutical circle’⁶⁹ of moral reasoning, which for decades contributed little to the process of peace⁷⁰ in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland. It may also offer a possible way of entering that circle to good effect in other conflict situations.

Uncovering moral reasoning

On Friday, 10th April 1998, Senator George Mitchell, who was chairing the negotiations on the future governance of Northern Ireland, was able to announce that agreement had been reached between all the parties involved.⁷¹ For the next six weeks in the run up to a referendum on the Agreement to be held on 22nd May, the community in Northern Ireland was consumed by discussion and debate over the Agreement. The future hung in the balance. Deeply held convictions were plainly exposed in the crisis of this period, which identifies it as a period of particular significance for the investigation of what the Christian community in Northern Ireland really believed about the issues of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.

Furthermore, the negotiations leading up to the Agreement raised a number of particularly difficult issues for many, two of which were the decommissioning of terrorist weapons and the early release of prisoners. The decommissioning issue had been discussed during and prior to the process and was the key reason why one of the Ulster Unionist negotiators walked out of the negotiations.⁷² The question of the early release of convicted prisoners had not played largely in public discussion and debate until the agreement was signed. It was to become for many Christians the

⁶⁹ David Jasper explains the concept of the hermeneutical circle, making the point that ‘Interpretation ... is not a process along a linear trajectory...’ and draws attention to Heidegger ‘what is important is not how we get out of the hermeneutical circle ... but how initially we get in’, D. Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 21. Consideration of the cyclical nature of understanding and at what point it is possible to enter to provide legitimate challenge to the process is of interest to this study.

⁷⁰ It would be interesting to investigate the degree to which the Christian community was merely trying to keep pace with political peacemaking efforts rather than provide leadership in the conflict. The general sense would be that Christian moral reasoning was usually playing ‘catch up’ with the process.

⁷¹ De Bréadún, *The Far Side of Revenge: Making Peace in Northern Ireland*, p. 139. De Bréadún provides a detailed chronological account of the events of the Peace Process and particularly what he calls ‘The Long Good Friday’. See also the CAIN website which provides a chronology of the troubles, maintained by the University of Ulster, at <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk>.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 136. The negotiator in question was a well known member of an evangelical church in Northern Ireland as well as of the Evangelical Alliance and as such his objections were, for him, and as understood by the community at large, based on moral grounds.

make or break issue in their response to the agreement.⁷³ It appeared that many could accept the ambiguities in the agreement over the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons but prisoner release seemed to play out differently in the community because it struck at the heart of the nature of the conflict,⁷⁴ principles of justice and the price of peace.⁷⁵ Although the issue had been raised previously by some Christian groups⁷⁶ and while for many within the political establishment it was another unpalatable but necessary component of the Agreement, there seemed to be little preparation for the convictional crisis experienced by many during the six week period leading up to the referendum.⁷⁷

⁷³ *The Times* newspaper devoted its leader column on 15th April to the issue of the Agreement. 'The prospect of terrorist killers leaving jail in the coming months ...unsettles many within the Unionist community.' 'Editorial, The Mirror Crack'd', *The Times*, 15th April 1998.

⁷⁴ The BBC carried a news report which stated, 'the most difficult part of the Good Friday political agreement for many in Northern Ireland is the release of prisoners'. BBC, 'Confronting the Pain of the Past', (1998).

⁷⁵ 'Eleven Reasons Why Christians Should Vote against the Agreement' (Larne: Christians Against the Agreement, 1998). A hastily organised group called Christians Against the Agreement argued that the early release of prisoners amounted to the 'Rewarding of Lawbreakers'. They argued that the authorities '...are given a sword, and commanded to be a terror to evil workers, not healers or negotiators (Romans 13:4)'. The same organisation placed a substantial advert in the News Letter on 21st May – the day before the referendum – entitled 'Christ or Barabbas?'. The advert dealt exclusively with the issue of the early release of prisoners: 'The release of political prisoners is no new thing. During the trial of Christ, Pilate held a referendum. He wanted to know if the mob would choose to have Christ set free or Barabbas. ...Just as then, so today. We have a mob who is screaming for the release of similar men, and for the crucifixion of justice and truth.' The Presbyterian Church published a document which placed the issue of 'The Release of Convicted Paramilitary Prisoners' (note the careful non-political wording) ahead of the issue of decommissioning. 'This may be the most difficult part of the cost of peacemaking.' 'A Presbyterian Response to "the Agreement"', ed. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (Belfast: The Church and Government Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1998). ECONI also released a document called 'Releasing the Prisoners'. The document recognised that 'For many Christians ...early release is not a problem of numbers or precedent, it is a problem of principle' ECONI, 'Releasing the Prisoners?' (Belfast: ECONI, 1998).

⁷⁶ 'New Pathways: Developing a Peace Process in Northern Ireland' (Belfast: The Faith and Politics Group, 1997). The Faith and Politics Group, an ecumenical group, included a section in this pamphlet on 'The Early Release of Politically Motivated Prisoners'. Given that many Christians considered the prisoners to be merely terrorists and criminals (as did the British government) there was little sympathy with the statement '...politically motivated prisoners, both loyalist and republican, are deeply rooted in our community', p. 11. The group had published a pamphlet on the issue several years earlier, 'Liberty to the Captives? The Early Release of Politically Motivated Prisoners' (Belfast: An Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics, 1995). Ian Major, a conservative evangelical pastor previously involved in the world of the paramilitaries, made a similar argument. 'We evangelicals have been virtually silent concerning a Christian response to the greatest ethical issue Ulster has faced over thirty years ...the ethics of amnesty.' Major also refers to 'politically motivated prisoners' and addresses the question of the 'troubles' as war. His view, radical for a conservative evangelical, was that '...war is no less real because it is undeclared ...it suited the British to treat the whole thing as a civil disturbance'. He concludes by saying 'To scapegoat the paramilitary and security force offenders would make hypocrites of ourselves and bring us under the just condemnation of God.' I. Major, 'Should the Sword Devour Forever? A Biblical Defence of Amnesty' (Craigavon: Ian Major, 1998).

⁷⁷ S. McKay, *Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People*, new updated ed. (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2005). McKay provides an insight as to how Protestants responded to the issue of early release in some of the sixty in-depth interviews conducted across Northern Ireland.

Stanley Hauerwas identified part of the struggle for many Christians in Northern Ireland when he said:

...the conflicts in Bosnia, South Africa, and Northern Ireland are not ...the work of morally inferior people. ...For at least in these societies you still have people willing to be killed as well as to kill in honor of their forebears. Such societies are probably the only kind in modernity that deserve to be called 'historical' just to the extent that they live by memory. ...irrespective of how the conflict may be misused by some, the conflict itself is morally worthy.⁷⁸

Hauerwas was able to process this concept within an ethical framework which understood the significance of narrative in the shaping of community. But Hauerwas was also able to see how the Christian narrative of the cross reshaped the understanding of the Christian community and any localised, historically situated expression of Christian community in the modern world.⁷⁹ Embedded as it was in the conflict and largely dependent upon propositional theology,⁸⁰ by and large, the Christian community in Northern Ireland was bereft of such a vision or understanding of how Christian convictions could be shaped and reshaped at the Communal and Anastatic spheres.

Yoder's observations on The New Eschatology following the Constantinian revolution are also helpful. Yoder's comment that the approach to ethics changed because it was necessary to support the regime (in Northern Ireland terms – our divided baptised politicised communities) and provide 'some guidance as he [the ruler] does things the earlier church would have disapproved of'⁸¹ reflects something of the dilemma facing Christians as they sought to untangle their various ethnic identities, their responsibility as democratic participants, their understanding of justice,

⁷⁸ S. Hauerwas, 'A Time to Heal: Why Time Cannot and Should Not Heal the Wounds of History' (Belfast: ECONI, 1999). Hauerwas was invited to address the annual ECONI conference in 1998 under the theme of 'A Time to Heal'.

⁷⁹ S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). See in particular chapter 5, The Church in a Divided World: The Interpretative Power of the Christian Story. See also the development of his assertion that 'The overriding political task of the church is to be the community of the cross'. S. Hauerwas and W.H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 47. Many of these issues are developed in S. Hauerwas and W. H. Willimon *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), particularly chapters 2 and 3.

⁸⁰ McClendon's insight in his discussion on the embodiment of beliefs as opposed to 'a set of empty propositions' is important in this respect. McClendon, *Biography as Theology; How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, p. 148-9.

⁸¹ J.H. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 137. See also, J.H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich., Carlisle, UK: Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1994).

loyalty to Christ, reasoning based on Scripture and the harsh reality of thirty years of killings and bombings.

Although none is writing out of a conflict situation and perhaps that is what makes their insights possible as well as valuable, McClendon,⁸² Hauerwas, Yoder and Stassen⁸³ offer means of reflection upon the struggles apparent in moral reasoning in the conflict in Northern Ireland. Just as Emmanuel Katongole acknowledges, 'Hauerwas has taught me that the challenge of Christian social ethics is primarily one of social imagination',⁸⁴ so, while the history of Northern Ireland cannot be rewritten, Christian communities in other conflict situations may yet be able to imagine a different way of being in the world and benefit from an examination of the lessons to be learned, practices to be adopted⁸⁵ and pitfalls to be avoided.

Conclusion

The inseparable nature of religion and political/ethnic identity during the conflict in Northern Ireland has been demonstrated in the brief summary in the section on faith and identity. It has also been demonstrated in the section on convictions and moral reasoning that whether following the Anglo-American or European non-relativist, non-deconstructionist postmodern approach to hermeneutics, language is key. Furthermore, it has been shown that following McClendon and Smith's approach to the analysis of religious language there exists a viable and valuable methodological approach to assessing the justification or otherwise of both the religious language and the 'conviction sets' of religious communities.

The section on models of moral reasoning has shown that such an assessment can then be set in the context of a model (or an amended model)

⁸² McClendon's 'this is that' and 'then is now' concepts provide not only an expression of a 'baptist Vision' but a means of theological analysis and a methodological approach to description of a setting. McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol.1*, p. 32. For a critique of McClendon's 'this is that' and 'then is now' see: R.E. Barron, 'Considering the Systematic Theology of James William McClendon, Jr.', *Modern Theology* 18, no. 2 (2002); T.N. Finger, 'James McClendon's Theology Reaches Completion: A Review Essay', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76, no. 1 (2002).

⁸³ Besides the breadth of issues addressed in *Kingdom Ethics*, Stassen also contributes much that is helpful in, for example, his contribution to *Authentic Transformation*, particularly his section on 'The Transforming Church Embodied', G.H. Stassen et al., *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 222ff.

⁸⁴ E. Katongole in L.G. Jones, R. Hutter and C.R.V. Ewell, eds., *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2005), p. 139.

⁸⁵ The significance and role of 'practices' has not been developed in this essay but from the philosophical work of MacIntyre, reflections such as Practical Theology and Christian Ethics in D.B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 45ff, to the practical proposals of Stassen in for example G.H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2004) there is much to be explored and considered.

of moral reasoning based on the proposals of Parushev, which in turn would provide a means of understanding the processes of self understanding and interpretation of Scripture by the Christian communities in the conflict.

A viable means of uncovering moral reasoning by breaking in to the extended period of the conflict to observe and provide a thick description of the Christian perceptions of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation has been proposed. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the reflections of Hauerwas, Yoder and Stassen will further facilitate a theological assessment of the moral reasoning of Christians in Northern Ireland, particularly in regard to the struggle over the early release of prisoners which drew to the fore the nature of the basic convictions that informed ethical reasoning and use of Scripture on the issues of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.

Many other questions remain. For example, can it be shown to be justified that the key issues to be investigated are Peace, Justice and Reconciliation? Why not Forgiveness and Reconciliation, or the duo of Peace and Justice? In what way can the various religious groups be configured for the purpose of analysis? How sound is the concept of the proposed stretching of the Parushev model of moral reasoning, indeed, how transferable would any conclusions drawn be for other contexts of conflict and is there another context against which the findings and proposals could be tested? In regard to the issues of convictions, Scripture and conflict in Northern Ireland there yet remain more questions than answers. Clearly further investigation of these matters is required.

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Book Reviews

James M. Renihan

Edification and Beauty

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Volume 17

Paternoster, 2008, 207 pp, ISBN 978-1-84227-251-0.

James Renihan is Professor of Historical Theology at the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies, Escondido, California. He has, in this carefully researched book, examined the ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists from 1675-1705. The centre of his study is the Second London Particular Baptist Confession of Faith 1677/1689, which has become important for Calvinistic Baptists of the present day.

Renihan seeks to rescue Confessionalist Baptist theology from what he sees as nineteenth and twentieth century distortions, both conservative, for example Successionist and Landmark interpretations of Baptist history, and more liberal, anti-creedal attempts to set freedom at the very core of Baptist faith and practice, such as Leon McBeth's 'The Baptist Heritage'.

He looks at the emergence of the Particular Baptists from the Separatist/Independent milieu of the early decades of the seventeenth century, basing much of what he says on the 'Kiffin' Manuscript, and admitting some Dutch Anabaptist influence on Blunt and others. Presumably Stephen Wright's study of the 'Early English Baptists, 1603-1649', appeared too late to affect his treatment of these early days, and it is with developments in the last quarter of the seventeenth century that the most valuable part of his thesis deals.

Renihan calls the early Particular Baptists primitivists, in the sense that they seek to base theology, worship and ecclesiology on Scripture, and to put into effect the so-called Regulative Principle. Working both from the Confession and from Church Books, he illustrates the fidelity of Kiffin, Knollys and Keach, among others, to the teachings of the Bible, and he demonstrates that in matters of Church Government, the nature of the true Church, the officers of the Church, and the worship of Christians, the Particular Baptists had much in common with the framers of the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Platform.

He carefully distinguishes between Independency and Congregationalism, stating that Leadership by elders did not preclude the effective decision-making by the male members of the Congregation. More than mere friendly relations were maintained with neighbouring Baptist churches. Congregations decided to enter into Association with others and

connectionalism was taken seriously. Believers' Baptism was urged, but not all Particular churches were closed membership. Women were not allowed to speak in church but could raise their hands to vote. All these and many more aspects of ecclesiology are illustrated with quotations from a variety of Church Books, of London and other churches, and Renihan has read widely in the sources and secondary material. There is an interesting chapter on the great controversy over singing in church, which led Isaac Marlow to break with Keach's Church. The basis of all the arguments is fidelity to scripture, although as the singing controversy illustrated, different interpretations of the regulative Principle were possible.

Renihan has added detail to our knowledge of the developing Particular Churches at a time of their growth, and has illustrated their use of a Confession and the Regulative Principle. Whether his Thesis can be transferred to other eras of our history, and whether it is a model for present-day Baptist Churches will remain a matter of debate.

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Cynthia Y. Aalders

To Express the Ineffable: The Hymns and Spirituality of Anne Steele

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Volume 40

Paternoster, 2008, 211 pp, ISBN: 978-1-84227-629-7

Cynthia Y. Aalders (Regent College, Vancouver) explores the spirituality of the hymns of Anne Steele, an 18th century British Baptist. Although very few of Steele's hymns are known or sung today, during her own lifetime and indeed well into the 19th century her hymns enjoyed immense popularity and therefore deserve a careful look as provided by this study.

Aalders situates Steele's work in the context of the flourishing hymn-writing activity of 18th century Britain. She traces the influences of other major hymn writers on Steele – Watts, Cowper, Wesley – but also demonstrates the distinctive features of Steele's poetry and theology.

Aalders sees several factors contributing to Steele's unique style: her gender – an unusual one for a hymn-writer at the time; her strong awareness of the presence of suffering in the life of a Christian; her Calvinistic context and continuous frustration with herself, 'a guilty worm'; and, as the title of this study conveys, her conscious struggle to find words 'for expressing the ineffable', i.e. using language in relation to God. All of

these aspects together have given birth to hymns marked by tentativeness or even explicit doubt, compared with the confident styles of other (principally male) hymn-writers of the period. She is not afraid of daring questions, addressed both to God and herself. However, as her hymns and poems advance, they tend to move towards hope manifested and experienced through God's grace in Christ. In a manner typical of much of the Psalms, this emerging hope has a depth rooted in the honesty of the foregoing lament. This indeed is quite a contrast to much of our current hymnody which is rather uncomfortable with uncertainty and any signs of struggle in comprehending God. Steele, on the other hand, could ask: 'Are thy ears deafen'd to my cry / That will not hear my moan... / Why dost thou then withhold thy strength... / Lord shall I see and seek in vain / And still no answer have...' (p. 113).

The author employs biographical research into Steele's life which has seen a good share of struggle and anguish and personal traumas (though, interestingly, perhaps less than popularly attributed to her). Aalders notes Steele's frustration with the discrimination of women in regard to educational opportunities – 'Ah why is Woman thus depress'd and scorn'd / By tyrant Man?' However, she also expounds upon the strong encouragement Steele received from her friends (males including), thus highlighting the importance of friendships for this 'poor Nun', as Steele occasionally referred to herself.

As Steele's hymns were of devotional nature, they are often marked by a very explicit 'I' – an unusual move for the time, but one that clearly struck a cord in many a heart and helped lots of her hymns to find ways into congregational singing. However, popular as they were way after Steele's death, they have not lasted into the 20th and 21st century, with a few exceptions.

Aalders calls attention to the importance of hymns in shaping the theology of a believing community, in ways both explicit and implicit. We echo this concern here at IBTS, believing that further work on hymnody from historical, biblical and theological perspectives is necessary for verbalising, scrutinising, and bettering the life and witness of the church. *To Express the Ineffable* is a helpful input which highlights one Baptist woman's contribution to the story not only of Particular Baptists in Britain, but indeed of the larger scene of budding evangelicalism.

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Notice of Books Published

It might be thought inappropriate for a journal to carry book reviews of books sponsored by the owners of the Journal and written by members of the Editorial Board, so instead of formal reviews, we present here notices of three books published as part of the celebrations of four hundred years since the first baptist church assembled in Amsterdam. We include comments from other scholars who have read and who commend these works to a wider reading public. For our part, we believe all three of these books ought to feature in the libraries of every subscriber to this Journal. They are, in our modest view, worthy publications to mark the EBF *Amsterdam 400* event.

The Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought

John H Y Briggs (General Editor), Peder Eidberg, Keith G Jones, Toivo Pilli, Wiard Popkes, Ian M Randall and Sergei V Sannikov (Associate Editors)

Foreword by David Coffey

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Volume 33

Paternoster Press, 2009, 541 pages, ISBN 978-1-84227-535-1

Eight years in conception, planning, writing and publishing, this monumental work of reference offers entries from 'ABC-USA' to 'Zwingli' via hundreds of entries on which European Baptists have expressed a view, or about which they have experience. There are entries on every union, seminary and major institution within the fifty-two Unions and Conventions that comprise the European Baptist Federation (EBF); there are comments on all the major and many of the minor doctrinal themes and issues of Christianity; entries on worship, church life, ecclesiology, ecumenism, mission and ministry.

As Professor Alan P F Sell comments, 'Baptists in other parts of the world who think that all Baptists are as they are will gasp with amazement; other European Christians will find much that echoes their own thought and experience as well as some thought-provoking points of difference'. Professor Richard V Pierard of Indiana State University comments, 'it calls attention to the vital role Europeans play in the world Baptist community'. Professor David Bebbington (Stirling) says, 'the book will be a standard work of reference for understanding this vigorous body of Christians'. BWA President David Coffey has this to say, 'I am sure that the wide distribution of this book amongst our constituency and beyond will be of great advantage to our nurture and our witness'.

We, ourselves, are amazed that such a comprehensive, fascinating and useful book has been produced. It is really very important to have your own copy for reference and edification.

The European Baptist Federation: A Case Study in European Baptist Interdependency 1950 - 2006

Keith G Jones

Foreword by Ian M Randall

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Volume 43

Paternoster Press, 2009, 319 pages, ISBN 978-1-84227-639-6

A criticism often levelled at Baptists is that they have no theology of ecclesial reality beyond the local. In this book, Keith Jones describes the history and current life of the European Baptist Federation and seeks to demonstrate that there is an ecclesial reality within the organisation, expressed in its communal life, mission activity, working on theological education, in relationship to other Christian world communions and in its decision-making processes.

Dr Keith W Clements comments, 'this book breaks new ground in both church history and theology. No-one reading this book can be left in any doubt that Baptists, for all their emphasis on the local congregation, see real theological significance in forms of wider fellowship and missionary structure. A work of first-rate importance.' Professor Alan P F Sell says, 'Dr Jones' mastery of his sources is thorough; he has filled a significant gap in Baptist history; and his book should be read by Baptists, by their ecumenical partners, and even by non-ecumenical Baptists'.

Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe

Ian M Randall

Foreword by Tony Peck

Neufeld Verlag 2009, 206 pages, ISBN 978-3-937896-78-6

This book, by our distinguished Baptist historian, Ian Randall, charts Baptists beginnings in Europe from the Anabaptists in Switzerland, the General Baptists in Amsterdam, the Particular Baptists in London, beginnings in French-speaking Europe, the missionary enterprise of Oncken, developments in the Nordic and Baltic nations, expansion amongst the Slavs, the Latin countries, southern Europe and throughout central Asia and the Middle East.

This comprehensive story is told with academic thoroughness, but in an enthusiastic and accessible way. David Coffey says, this fascinating volume is more than a compilation of stories of the regional beginnings of the one European Baptist family; it is a testimony of the enduring grace and goodness of God to a missionary people called Baptist'.